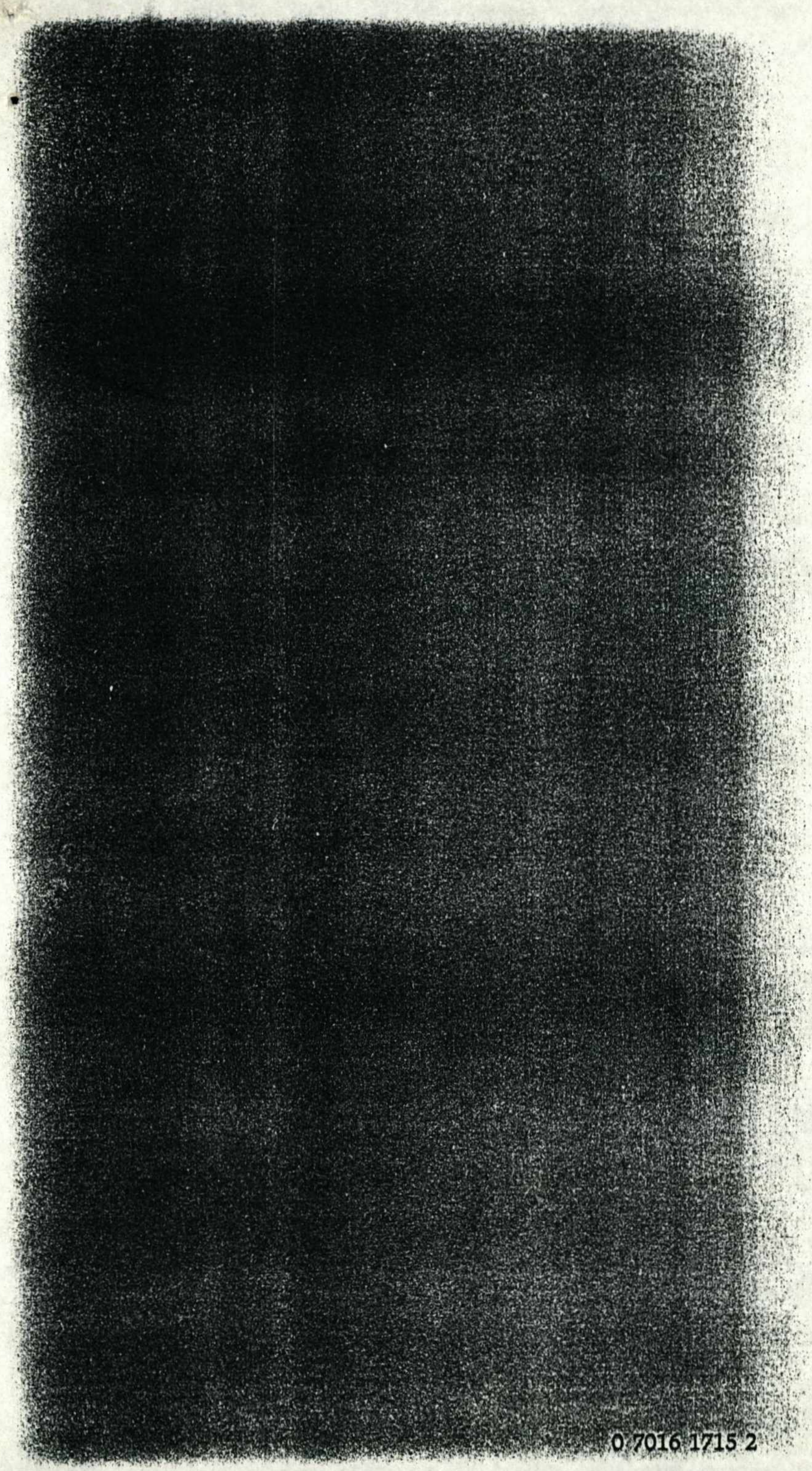

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the Social Democrat ministers, thus removing the political leaders who had been most closely involved in the Timor problem.

However, at least some of the members of the National Decolonization Commission were still of the opinion that Portugal should continue to press for a proper consultation of the wishes of the Timorese, and in July the authorities in the colony pressed on with elections for local councils at *concelho* level. These elections gave a return of about 55 per cent to Fretilin candidates, a strong but lesser showing to UDT, and negligible support for Apodeti. The Fretilin victory was clearly not welcomed by the right wing in the territory, and it was their fears and suspicions that Indonesian agents were able to manipulate. False rumours were deliberately circulated by the Indonesians through agents, some of whom penetrated deep into the territory. One such story was that Fretilin had set up secret military camps at which Vietnamese officers were providing sophisticated military training. The Portuguese military commander told the author that he and his colleagues knew these reports to be completely without any foundation, but they had difficulty in countering them. Then there were reports of a planned Fretilin coup, which also appear to have been part of the disinformation campaign by Indonesian intelligence. Even the bishop of Timor, Bishop Ribeiro, was taken in by some of these reports. For example, he told UDT and Kota leaders that he had obtained information that Vietnamese troops had been smuggled into the territory, and urged them to prepare themselves.

In these very difficult circumstances, the Portuguese were hardly able to turn to Australia for support. While the Australian government was by no means unaware of the debilitating effect of the ongoing crisis in Lisbon on the decolonization of East Timor, as well as of the sinister activities of *Operasi Komodo*, it did not respond to calls for help from Timor. Although Australian diplomats made visits to Dili during 1975, as one Portuguese later bitterly put it, 'They came with eyes full of sympathy, said little, and apparently did nothing.' Major Mota himself remarked that Australia was always 'expressing concern at what was happening' but in reality did absolutely nothing to help. Certainly, as will be discussed later, Australia's influence in Jakarta, and, more importantly, in the countries with whom Indonesia had close economic and defence links, could have been a decisive factor had Canberra resolved to take positive action to avert the crisis ahead.

6

Indonesia and East Timor's decolonization

In spite of the Portuguese apprehensions that were rife in the two previous decades, it was not until after the Lisbon coup of 25 April 1974 that the Indonesians gave other than cursory attention to the insignificant colony adjacent to their province of East Nusatenggara. In fact, when the preparatory talks for Indonesian independence were taking place, some Indonesian leaders urged that the North Borneo territories and East Timor be included in a wider Indonesian Republic, as well as the territories 'from Sabang to Merauke', but if a firm proposal along these lines was ever made the circumstances of the time were hardly propitious for it to have been seriously promoted. In the event, Portuguese colonial rule over the colony was firmly re-established by the time Indonesia had formally attained independent status in 1949. In the 1950s the central government in Jakarta was much too preoccupied with the task of welding its conglomeration of islands and peoples, with their great ethnic diversity, into a unified state to give any attention to a politically insignificant and economically impoverished territory like Portuguese Timor. Its leaders faced political instability in Jakarta and armed insurrection launched by separatist movements such as the *Darul Islam* in Java, the RMS (*Republik Maluku Selatan*) movement in the South Moluccas, the TII (*Tentara Islam Indonesia*) led by Daud Beureuh in Atjeh, and the 'Colonels' Revolt' of 1957–58, which involved insurrections in both Sumatra and Sulawesi.

In the late 1950s Indonesia seemed to go out of its way to disclaim any designs on Portuguese Timor. In 1957, for example, the Indonesian representative told the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly that 'the attempt to link West Irian with East New Guinea simply because the two territories happened to form one island would create a very dangerous precedent, for example, in the case of the islands off Borneo and Timor. Indonesia has no claim to any territories which had not been part of the former Netherlands East Indies. No one should suggest otherwise or advance dangerous theories in that respect'. Three years later Dr Subandrio reaffirmed this position, also in an address to the General Assembly. He said that

'Indonesia explicitly does not make any claim at all to territories such as that in Borneo or Timor which lies [*sic*] within the Indonesian Archipelago, but was not part of the Netherlands East Indies'.

On the island itself, incidents did occur from time to time, but these usually erupted because of internecine disputes within *sucos* straddling sections of the border, and they were invariably resolved by local officials, with minimum intervention on the part of Lisbon and Jakarta. As we have seen, the 1959 revolt was not in fact engineered by Jakarta but was inspired by *Permesta* refugees who had been granted political refuge by the Portuguese, and their abortive attempt to bring about the overthrow of the colonial regime both surprised and embarrassed the central government authorities. Furthermore, although its aim was not clear, the *Permesta* group was probably not planning to make East Timor part of the Republic from which they had been fleeing. The Indonesian consul in Dili may have played a part in the affair, but his complicity seems to have been a personal initiative taken without the knowledge of his masters in Jakarta. Although the incident left the Portuguese in jitters, the Indonesians glossed over it, and, as the campaign spearheaded by President Sukarno to 'regain' West Irian gained momentum, the President on occasion sought to exploit Portugal's unchallenged position in East Timor as evidence that Indonesia had no territorial ambitions. When *Konfrontasi* got under way, Portuguese Timor's unmolested position was again used to demonstrate that Indonesia was not an imperialist power.

There is evidence that, in the 1960s, the Indonesian government, at least while Sukarno was in power, became more sensitive to the continued existence of Portuguese colonial rule in the eastern part of Timor, and began to acknowledge it to be a problem ahead for Indonesian foreign policy, particularly as the Salazar regime's colonial intransigence increasingly became the subject of criticism from Third World countries, of whom Indonesia aspired to be a leader. At an Afro-Asian meeting in Jakarta in 1961, Ruslan Abdulgani, at the time vice-chairman of Sukarno's Supreme Advisory Council, called on his fellow countrymen 'to fill your hearts with hatred not only for Portuguese colonialism, but for all colonialism still existing on Asian and African soil'. He went on to add that Indonesia's 'eyes and heart are directed towards Portuguese Timor and Goa', which were still 'under the power of colonialism'. In 1962 General Nasution referred to the situation in Timor as one of 'enslavement'.

The Indian seizure of Goa aroused speculation that East Timor was ripe for a similar operation that would attract only feigned disapproval from Western nations, and applause from the non-aligned world. But Indonesia soon became absorbed with the confrontation of

Malaysia — a much more serious challenge — and the Portuguese in Timor were merely the butt of a few provocative remarks by Indonesian leaders. Dr Subandrio declared that Indonesia was not ignoring the situation in Timor, and, on one occasion, he uttered a vague threat: 'Do not wait until the Indonesian people's anger flares up.' In September 1963 Ruslan Abdulgani, at the time Minister for Information, was reported as saying: 'Although we are not an expansionist nation we cannot allow people of common ancestry to be persecuted and thrown in prison merely because they want to unite with the fatherland of their ancestors.' But this was one of the few statements to imply that the Timorese should at some stage be absorbed into Indonesia. In the same year a prominent army leader, General Mokogina, was reported in the *Washington Post* as saying: 'If the people of Timor today or tomorrow started a revolution we would support them. . . . After independence, if they wanted to stay independent, fine. . . . If they want to join Indonesia, we will talk it over.'

It is probable that these statements did not really reflect an upsurge of interest in liberating East Timor from the yoke of colonialism. These occasional remarks by Indonesian leaders need to be considered against the fact that, at the time, some of the non-aligned states began to contrast the Sukarno regime's frenetic efforts to undermine Malaysia with its near silence on the plight of a neighbouring people under the colonial yoke of the arch-enemy of Third World states. The remarks by Ruslan Abdulgani and Subandrio might therefore have been mere cosmetic touches designed to redress the rhetorical imbalance. The most precise statement of policy appears to have been the brief comments of Mokogina to which I have just referred. In the same year General Nasution himself, in a reference to both East Timor and North Borneo, remarked: 'We support their struggles, but do not claim their territories.' On the ground, relations were distant but cordial. Indonesia maintained a consulate in Dili, and relations between authorities on the border at Oecussi and at the frontier were correct, with the occasional incidents being easily contained. A movement for the liberation of East Timor existed in Jakarta, under a Timorese named Mao Klao (who was virtually unknown in East Timor, and continued to be unknown even after April 1974), but although it was accorded a measure of recognition it appears to have been given little real encouragement or support.

Under both Sukarno and Suharto there was a kind of complacency in Indonesian political attitudes towards the Timor colony. From Jakarta's point of view the West Irian and Confrontation questions were much more important and absorbing, and, in these disputes, East Timor had no strategic significance. No outside power, and certainly none of the major powers, showed the slightest interest in the territory. The Portuguese themselves, after 1963, went out of their way to ensure that the Indonesians had no grounds for suspicion. In the early 1960s, the authorities in Dili did make several attempts to strengthen links with Australia and, especially after Indonesia launched a military operation against West Irian, to elicit some assurance from Canberra that Australia would not stand idly by if Indonesia were to make a move against their vulnerable colony. But in the strategic reappraisals being undertaken in Canberra in the early 1960s the position of East Timor became less important, and as international pressure on the Salazar regime mounted the Portuguese presence was perceived to be more of a liability than an asset.

Portuguese appeals thus fell on deaf ears, and Australia's envoys to Timor were given strict instructions not to encourage their hosts in the belief that, in the event of an Indonesian action against the territory, Australia would be prepared to come to their rescue. Indeed, the Menzies government reacted coolly to an approach in 1962 by a group of Portuguese dissidents (including an army colonel, a judge and some other senior officials) who sounded out what would be Canberra's reaction if they were to launch a coup against the Salazar regime's representatives in Timor, a move which, they seemed to believe, might precipitate Salazar's downfall. In no circumstances, the Consul was instructed unequivocally, should the rebels be encouraged to believe that Australia would support their insurrection. The negative reaction from Canberra, which implied that Australia would not stand in the way if Portugal were to seek permission to fly in troop reinforcements via Cocos Island, led to the conspiracy being abandoned. Australia not only kept a distance from the Portuguese position in East Timor: in informal ways, Canberra's stand-off policy was made known to Indonesia so that Jakarta became aware before the mid-1960s that Australia would not obstruct any Indonesian move to acquire the colony, by whatever means. From this time onwards, there developed an assumption by Indonesians that Australia no longer regarded East Timor as having any strategic importance, and that the Portuguese colony's future lay as part of Indonesia.

After 1965 luck was again with the Portuguese as far as Indonesia was concerned. One can only speculate on what might have happened after *Konfrontasi* lost momentum, had President Sukarno remained in power, but East Timor would certainly have offered a very tempting target to a regime that was seeking to improve its battered image in the non-aligned bloc. But by 1966 power had slipped into the hands of a right-wing military regime, which, in the aftermath of the bloody events following the abortive coup, was anxious to establish a reputation for restraint, moderation and reliability, which would facilitate an inflow of Western capital, and entice Western commitment to the development of Indonesia's flagging economy. The poor colony of East Timor held no interest for the new regime, whose leaders were no doubt gratified to have as a neighbour a regime equally vehemently opposed to communism, and generally intolerant of radical influences of any kind. No other country had expressed any interest in East Timor, and the new regime noted with satisfaction the growing assumption in Canberra that the colony would fall under Indonesian control, should the Portuguese decide to pull out. Indeed, the issue of Timor's future was so inconsequential that the new regime does not appear to have formed any definite policy on it. In general, however, the Suharto regime's position was influenced by its desire to reassure neighbouring states and territories that *Konfrontasi* was a nightmare of the past. East Timor would probably, in due course, fall into the Republic's lap like an overripe piece of fruit.

At the time most outside observers gave little thought to the rights of the Timorese. An article by an American academic, Professor Donald Weatherbee, written in the aftermath of the 1965 coup, expressed such an attitude. He observed that 'when Indonesian ideology and interests converge in a Timor "liberation" policy, the Portuguese will be faced with the realities of power in the archipelago'. He concluded: 'In a sense Portuguese Timor is a trust territory, the Portuguese holding it in trust for Indonesia.'[1] There was of course no moral justification, even at that time, for this cursory dismissal of East Timor's right to self-determination, but such a view was common among the few Australian and American officials responsible for handling Indonesian affairs, and during informal contacts it was inevitably conveyed to Indonesian officials.

Border skirmishes continued to occur after 1966, but these difficulties were usually resolved in the cordial atmosphere which prevailed between the senior army officers on both sides. There were nevertheless some curious twists in the relationship. As the result of an initiative by the governor, Colonel Aldeia, who had developed an easy informal relationship with Colonel El Tari, the governor of East Nusatenggara, Foreign Minister Adam Malik was to visit Dili in mid-1972 to discuss the setting up of a joint border commission to facilitate the settling of disputes. But, in what was later termed an 'April Fool's Day joke', a report was carried by a Jakarta daily of 1 April of an insurrection in East Timor by an independence movement. An attempt was made to pass it off light-heartedly, but it was said to have been deliberately inspired, and, in the event, it had the effect of sabotaging the proposed visit. However, a few days later, on 5 April 1972, the Indonesian embassy in Canberra issued a press release which sought 'to clarify a point made by A.A.P.-Reuter News' that

'Indonesia will finance and support a liberation movement in Portuguese Timor'. In a sense reiterating the policy expressed by General Mokogina some nine years earlier, the release quoted Malik as saying that 'the movement of [*sic*] independence in Portuguese Timor will be supported by Indonesia only if the indigenous people of that region sincerely wished independence'. This time the word 'independence' was used in a way that may have made more sense in retrospect. The statement went on seemingly to dissociate Indonesia from any complicity in moves to force the issue. It read: 'Indonesia cannot push them towards independence if the people themselves remain passive about it. It is most important that the issue is not to be forced.'[2]

It seems that there was something of a shadow play behind this incident. Who aborted the Malik visit to Timor by leaking a false report of a coup in Dili? Certainly Malik's statement did not please some Indonesian leaders, among them Johnny Naro (vice-president of the Indonesian Parliament and a deputy from the Nusatenggara area), who was not at all in favour of any encouragement being given to the Timorese to set up an independent state if the Portuguese were to be forced out of the colony. He expressed the hope that the Indonesian government would take steps to appeal for the eventual return of Portuguese Timor to Indonesia. The Indonesian people, he said, should show concern at the plight of their 'brothers deprived of freedom, and economically destitute'.

In spite of the minor skirmishes and occasional provocative statements, the Foreign Ministry appears to have given scant attention to Timor until shortly after the Lisbon coup of April 1974. But it seems that another and more influential centre of power may have taken a closer interest in the subject. According to an Indonesian source, a Bakin/OPSUS (Special Operations) group took a look at the position in late 1972 or 1973 and came out strongly against the idea of supporting independence for East Timor, should the Portuguese withdraw or be forced out. With the Americans withdrawing from Vietnam, the Indonesian military concluded that even the continuation of Portuguese colonial rule was to be preferred to an independent state which could add a new dimension to Indonesia's security problems. There was a distinct preference for integration but at the time it was not clear how this could be brought about.

The Lisbon coup took the Indonesians by surprise, as it did most other countries. At first there were mixed reactions in Jakarta to the prospect of East Timor being decolonized and to the sudden emergence of political parties. According to a secondary source, Malik's off-the-cuff reaction was that the new Lisbon regime's policy towards overseas territories was progressive in character because 'there is the intention to give independence'. Naro, on the other hand, urged that Jakarta take 'preliminary steps and work out a special policy on Portuguese Timor so that finally that area will once again return to Indonesian control'. Although Indonesia had operated the largest consulate in East Timor for many years, with a Bakin agent on the staff, its appreciation of the real situation in the colony does not appear to have been soundly based. This may have been in part because of the restrictions placed on the movements of Indonesian consular staff, but a more important reason was the poor calibre of the staff appointed to the post. The consuls seemed to be adept at converting preposterous rumours into reports that were duly transmitted to Jakarta. For example, when a 7000-tonne Portuguese vessel visited Dili in 1963 and disembarked some 500 troop reinforcements, the Indonesian consul of the time confided to the author that he had just informed his government that more than 5000 troops had been landed! Yet it should not have taken a skilled observer to comprehend that the vessel concerned simply could not have accommodated more than a quarter of that number. Naturally enough, the Indonesian representatives were always on the look-out for evidence of opposition to Portuguese rule, but their assessments of particular incidents were often gross distortions of what really happened.

In 1974 Indonesia's man in Dili was Elias Tomodok, who originally came from the island of Roti, to the south-west of western Timor. The author spoke at length with Tomodok, during his fact-finding visit to the territory in mid-1974. He seemed obsessed with stories of intrigue and with the view that East Timor must become part of Indonesia. Even at that early stage, he had a grossly inflated view of the amount of support for Apodeti and of general attitudes towards the option of integration. According to Bill Nicol, who was not particularly sympathetic to Timorese politicians, Tomodok 'was respected by few' and 'was a fool, but a dangerous and powerful one'. Nicol claimed that Australian intelligence sources in Canberra described cables sent by Tomodok to Jakarta as 'inflammatory and provocative'.[3] But the fact remains that Tomodok was Indonesia's senior representative in the colony in the years before and after the April Coup, and during that time he must have supplied his masters with a series of very inaccurate accounts of political, social and economic conditions in the territory. Obviously, he would have been a strong advocate of *integrasi*, probably lacing his reports with fiction and falsification in order to strengthen his case.

In the circumstances, the authorities in Jakarta must have had a totally unreal picture of conditions in East Timor, when the Lisbon coup caused the territory to assume a new importance in Indonesia's foreign-policy perspectives. They may have been genuinely unaware of the strength of the feeling for independence. From the outset

Tomodok sought to discredit Fretilin, and to portray it as a sinister vehicle for a communist conspiracy rather than an independence movement. But he did most harm by exaggerating to an extreme degree the strength of support for integration with Indonesia. There is evidence that the Bakin/OPSUS group finally began to see through the reporting of the consulate, but their own commitment to *integrasi* caused them to make convenient use of this material to suit their own ends. In the first few weeks after the coup the Indonesians gained the impression that the Portuguese would remain for some time and that, in any case, decolonization would probably lead to a continued Portuguese role in East Timor. To some Indonesians, especially in the Foreign Ministry, this likelihood took much of the heat out of the Timor problem.

This attitude appears to have influenced Adam Malik in his response to Horta's visit to Jakarta in June 1974, which itself gave considerable encouragement to the independence movement. In effect, Jose Ramos Horta was able to obtain a written, unequivocal assurance from the Indonesian Foreign Minister that his government did not object to the prospect of an independent East Timor. This document, which is a remarkable statement in the light of later events, declared:

> In our view, these developments [the coup and the new regime's decision to allow Portugal's overseas territories to determine their own future] offered a good opportunity to the people of Timor to accelerate the process towards independence, as well as to generate overall national development, and to promote the progress of the people of Timor.

Malik placed on this written record certain principles to which his government adhered, which were of particular relevance to the changed situation in Timor. These were:

> 1. The independence of every country is the right of every nation, with no exception for the people in Timor.
> 2. The government as well as the people of Indonesia have no intention to increase or expand their territory, or to occupy territories other than what is stipulated in their constitution. This reiteration is to give you a clear idea, so that there may be no doubt in the minds of the people of Timor in expressing their own wishes.
> 3. For this reason, whoever will govern in Timor in the future after independence, can be assured that the government of Indonesia will always strive to maintain good relations, friendship and cooperation for the benefit of both countries.[4]

Many of the Timorese political leaders, who up to that time had remained apprehensive as to how Indonesia would react to the emergence of a fully independent state adjacent to West Timor, regarded Malik's letter as a green light of unexpected clarity. Why Malik responded in this way has never been satisfactorily explained.

Perhaps it was an off-the-cuff gesture, which may have been undertaken without consulting the relevant sections of his own ministry, who seem to have been urging a more restrained approach to the question. As it turned out, Malik unwittingly contributed to an upsurge of Timorese nationalism, but with it a mood of goodwill towards Indonesia. As has already been mentioned, elated ASDT leaders told the author that an appropriate response to such fraternal warmth and understanding might be for the new state to consider conceding the responsibility for East Timor's foreign affairs and defence to Jakarta. In retrospect it is indeed tragic that the basic ingredients of a compromise solution, which would have accommodated both Indonesian and Timorese interests, were never seriously explored.

In reality, when it came to decisions on sensitive foreign-policy issues, Malik's influence in Indonesia's military-dominated leadership was weak, and it was soon clear that the views he had expressed to Horta were very much at variance with those of a more influential group of generals who exercised real power within the Suharto regime. This group, which included Major-General Ali Murtopo, Lieutenant-General Yoga Sugama, Admiral Sudomo, and Major-General Benny Murdani, had their own views on foreign policy and, as the senior officials of the two powerful intelligence and security agencies Kopkamtib and Bakin, they were, in a sense, the custodians of the 'New Order', the *Orde Baru*. These generals possessed formidable resources of their own in the foreign policy making process through their control of the intelligence agencies and their influence in the diplomatic service: a large number of Indonesia's senior diplomats are generals. Murtopo also had at his disposal the Special Operations (OPSUS) apparatus, which had played an important part in the winding-down of *Konfrontasi*, and the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a kind of academic front organization which had worked closely with both Bakin and OPSUS. In their assessments the key officials of this fascinating network quickly arrived at a consensus that an independent East Timor was not in Indonesia's best interests. If the Portuguese were to leave, the territory should be absorbed into Indonesia. Foreign Minister Malik had no power base to match this formidable grouping, which exercised direct influence on the President, influence that was decisive in matters related to Indonesia's security and territorial integrity.

To Adam Malik and some of his colleagues, Indonesia's image as a moderate and stable power in an unstable South-east Asia, in the post-Vietnam period, warranted a responsive approach to the question of Timor's future, but the Murtopo group perceived the problem very differently. East Timor was located on the periphery of a region of the archipelago that had been largely neglected by national development strategies, where the majority of the local populations were non-Moslem, and where separatist sentiments were never far beneath the surface. The emergence of an independent East Timor would only stimulate unrest and provide a base for any externally inspired sabotage or political meddling. Further, if East Timor came under communist or left-wing influence it could pose a threat to Indonesia's 'soft under-belly'. These security considerations would have been influenced by other domestic factors, as well as the prevailing fear that Vietnam, with its large, experienced and sophisticated military machine and enormous resources of captured war material, would henceforth seek to undermine the security of ASEAN countries, of which Indonesia was probably the most vulnerable. In Indonesia there was growing disenchantment with the performance of the Suharto regime, especially the mounting large-scale corruption, the increasing oppressiveness of the military dictatorship, and the widening gap between the grinding poverty of the masses and the ostentatious affluence of the privileged few at the top. The most serious manifestation of this widespread discontent was the so-called 'Malari Affair' * of January 1974, when mobs ransacked and rioted in Jakarta, and hundreds were subsequently arrested. It is not without significance that two of the senior officers behind the formulation of the policy to integrate East Timor, Admiral Sudomo and General Yoga Sugama (both trusted associates of the President), had been appointed to the top positions of Kopkamtib and Bakin, as a result of the 'Malari Affair'.

By September 1974 the Murtopo group felt that steps should be taken to ensure that Timor became part of Indonesia as soon as possible. The shift to the left of the new regime in Lisbon may have convinced them that the hitherto ideologically reliable Portuguese could no longer be regarded as trusted anti-communist neighbours, and that their tenure should be brought to an early end. Two other events in that month spurred them on to action. In Timor itself, the ASDT assumed a more revolutionary mantle and changed its name to Fretilin, and, at the same time, the UDT party declared itself in favour of independence. But of even greater importance was the outcome of the Wonosobo meeting between President Suharto and Prime Minister Whitlam. It was concluded from this meeting that the Australian leader himself believed that East Timor was not economically viable enough to become independent, and that it should become part of Indonesia. Furthermore, it had emerged that Australia had no interest in the colony, and did not regard itself as a 'party principal' in any negotiations about its future. Prime Minister Whitlam's exact words have never been made public, but the press, and the Indonesians

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* 'Malari' is an acronym for the '15 January Incident'.

themselves, were apparently left in no doubt about his views. As Hamish McDonald recounted:

> On 6 September 1974, Suharto gained a new advantage when the Australian Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, met him for informal talks at Wonosobo, Central Java. Whitlam told Suharto he thought the best solution would be for East Timor to join Indonesia, adding with somewhat less emphasis that the wishes of the Timorese should be respected and that public reaction in Australia would be hostile if Indonesia used force.

McDonald also noted:

> An important factor in reassuring Suharto was not so much what Whitlam said, but the degree of *tepo seliru* (mutual understanding) Suharto believed the two had reached.[5]

The Australian Prime Minister's stand seemed to open the way for an international acceptance or, at least, understanding of Indonesia's special interests in relation to the decolonization of East Timor, and ultimately acceptance of the desirability of integration. In the short time that he had been in office Mr Whitlam had internationally become a well-known and widely respected leader and, under his tutelage, Australia had set out to assume a more dynamic and independent role in the changing global power configuration. Australia's proximity to East Timor, its capacity to monitor the situation in the Portuguese colony, and its close relationship with the Suharto regime, meant that its views on East Timor's future would carry considerable weight with the governments of those nations of greatest political and economic importance to Indonesia. In effect, Australia's tacit consent to the absorption of East Timor into Indonesia was crucial to the sensitive task of acquiring the territory without harming the Suharto regime's much-vaunted image as a stable, 'development-oriented' government, a regime without any territorial ambitions.

The Murtopo group's plans to acquire East Timor, by annexation if necessary, existed even before the Wonosobo meeting took place. As early as July, the author was informed confidentially by a sensitively placed official that key Indonesian generals had already resolved that 'independence for East Timor was simply not on'. But the President, who was concerned for his high standing in North America and Western Europe, was reluctant to go along with anything that might place his reputation in jeopardy. Mr Whitlam's stand on the question apparently encouraged the cautious Suharto to agree to the Murtopo plan, and in October, at a high-level meeting, *Operasi Komodo* was born. The aim of this operation was to bring about the integration of East Timor as quickly as possible, preferably by non-military means.

The Indonesians had already assessed that the new MFA regime in Lisbon was anxious to disengage Portugal from its colonial role as soon as possible and, based on Ali Murtopo's October meeting with the then Prime Minister Vasco Goncalves, had concluded that at least some of the leaders were not averse to the idea of handing East Timor over to Indonesia, after a certain period of decolonization. In September and October Murtopo's group had been busy laying the groundwork in key Western capitals for an understanding of Indonesia's security preoccupations and her special interest in Timor's future. Harry Tjan Silalahi and Liem Bian-Kie (now known as Yusuf Wanandi), of the CSIS, became key figures in *Operasi Komodo*. They quietly visited Western Europe and North America, while Murtopo himself, as has already been mentioned, visited Lisbon, among other places. Meanwhile, President Suharto, after his meeting with Prime Minister Whitlam, had talks with Tun Razak at Kuala Lumpur, where it seems that Indonesian concerns about the future position of the Portuguese colony were discussed, with the Malaysians responding sympathetically.

There was nothing novel about the *Operasi Komodo* plan, and the planners had in fact worked together on a similar project some thirteen years earlier, the aim of which had been to bring about the integration of West Irian, at that time with emphasis on armed insurgency. In 1961 one Major Ali Murtopo and a Major Rudjito were key figures in the planning of *Operasi Tjendrawasih*, which was in effect a combined operation designed to facilitate the military penetration of West New Guinea behind Dutch lines. The operation was the first major task of the newly formed Strategic Reserve, better known as KOSTRAD, a special strike force which came under the command of one Brigadier-General Suharto, whose deputy was a naval officer named Sudomo. An amphibious force moved to the Maluku Selatan area, on the West Irian coast, in late 1961 and, in due course, some paratroop units were dropped behind Dutch lines. One of these units was under the command of Captain Benny Murdani, a protege of General Suharto, who in 1975, then a major-general, was to take charge of the overall planning of the invasion of East Timor. Another young officer who was involved in *Operasi Tjendrawasih* was Lieutenant Dading Kalbuadi, who, as Colonel Dading, was to head the attack on Balibo and Maliana on 16 October 1975.

Operasi Komodo commenced as a subversive operation, the early activities of which have already been referred to. Its main propaganda thrust appears to have started in October 1974, but, according to Hamish McDonald, it did not get properly under way until early in 1975.[6] At first *Operasi Komodo* was more of a propaganda and political campaign than a military operation, providing coordination of diplomatic, subversive and propaganda activities. In this campaign, writes Hamish McDonald,

> Opsus took the leading role, with other agencies contributing where necessary. Ali Murtopo's network ran from Jakarta across to and over the border. Advising on diplomatic strategy were his political backroom team in the Jakarta academic-style institution, the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), which had become an important point of contact for foreign diplomats, academics and journalists. Two key figures in the CSIS on Timor were its Director, Harry Tjan Silalahi, the self-effacing former Catholic Party figure, who became respectfully dubbed 'The Foreign Minister' by his military counterparts for his effective secret diplomacy with Portugal and Australia, and Yusuf Wanandi (Liem Bian-Kie), the sometimes volatile West Sumatran-born political strategist who paid particular attention to the USA.[7]

Jose Martins' affidavit submitted to the U.N. Secretary-General early in 1976 also listed many of the personnel who were organizing *Operasi Komodo*. According to this account, initially the principal officials were Generals Yoga Sugama, Ali Murtopo and Benny Murdani, Colonel Sugiyanto (also an RPKAD officer who had been close to Murtopo), and Louis Taolin, the West Timorese related to the *liurai* of the Atoni people in that part of the island. Martins for a time was a trusted Bakin agent 'recruited' by Sugiyanto; he contended that General Murdani, Colonel Agus Hernoto (a communications specialist), Colonel Sinaga (a Sumatran who had worked with OPSUS), Colonel Dading, Colonel Kasenda and Major Andreas were added later. The operational network included the Sarana Carta Company (which provided a cover for agents), the firm P. T. Arjuna, Pertamina (which supplied helicopters), Antara news agency (which coordinated the fabrication of 'news items' for international consumption) and the army-controlled newspaper *Berita Yudha* (which also appears to have been a vehicle for the dissemination of the falsified press reports).

The international aspects of the operation were handled by Murtopo himself, occasionally with Sugiyanto, later also by Benny Murdani, and frequently in conjunction with the CSIS leaders, who maintained close informal links with leading Western diplomats. The early contacts carried out by the network have already been discussed. The Indonesians were soon able to establish that in Western Europe (Portugal aside) and in North America there was little interest in, or concern about, East Timor. All the governments in the non-communist world of importance to Indonesia, namely the Western Europeans, the United States, India, Japan and the ASEAN states, were at the outset motivated by a desire to sympathize with Jakarta's security anxieties in the uncertain aftermath of the withdrawal of the Americans from

Vietnam. The Indians knew and cared little about the situation in Timor, and apparently readily perceived something of a parallel with their own action against Goa in Jakarta's explanation of the problem of the small Portuguese colony. The Japanese evidently knew something about the situation in East Timor, and, because of their three-and-a-half-year occupation, they were one of the few countries to be familiar with the island itself. The Portuguese colony was no longer of any great economic importance to the Japanese, yet their businessmen had reportedly been on the verge of a sizeable investment in the upgrading of tourist facilities in East Timor when the Lisbon coup took place. Perhaps of greater importance to the energy-hungry Japanese were the reported prospects of finding oil and gas in the offshore areas to the south. Ironically, no one in Tokyo seems to have had any pangs of conscience about the rights of the Timorese. It would indeed have been an appropriate time for the Japanese, who had so rapaciously ruled the colony thirty years earlier, to do something to make amends and thus demonstrate that they really did take seriously their subsequent commitments to matters of principle in international law and behaviour. But, although Japanese officials had visited the colony from Jakarta, their assessments apparently revealed distorted assumptions about the extent of left-wing influence, and a distinct bias towards accommodating Indonesia's special interests. ASEAN governments, with the qualified exception of Singapore, appear to have accepted without question what their Indonesian colleagues told them about the growing influence of communism in Timor, and at an early stage they seem to have indicated their preference for *integrasi*, if necessary by circumventing established decolonization procedures.

In their approach to the Americans and Western Europeans the Indonesians were able to exploit the perceived security risks facing the archipelago after Vietnam, as well as a total lack of interest in a distant state of no political, economic or strategic importance whatever in a complex multipolar world, a state about which Europeans knew nothing. Thus, according to a Portuguese official, at the outset NATO representatives had made it clear that their sympathies were inclined towards Indonesia.

To the CSIS and other elements concerned with the handling of the international relations side of *Operasi Komodo*, Australia's position was of crucial importance in the first year. The stand taken by Mr Whitlam, a position shared by most of the Australian diplomats in Jakarta, was gratifying and encouraging, and may have caused Murtopo and his colleagues to overlook the less accommodating influence of other groups and individuals on Australian public opinion. It should be noted, however, that Mr Whitlam warned President Suharto at Wonosobo that the Australian public would not go along with the use of force. On the other hand, the need to promote a climate of sympathy and understanding in Australia was by no means neglected by *Operasi Komodo*. As part of the overall plan Indonesian officials and co-opted academics talked to selected influential groups, to political parties and to universities, particularly those with departments specializing in Indonesian or South-east Asian studies. The Indonesian argument clearly impressed most, though not all, of the Australian right, the majority of whom, even in the face of later evidence of Indonesian brutality against the Timorese, continued to display a public tolerance of, if not support for, Jakarta's moves to annex the Portuguese colony. But the Indonesians appear to have left the task of getting the Australian left to come to terms with 'the realities of the Timor situation' to the Whitlam government. In any case, they had precious little influence with this group: by the end of 1974 the Suharto regime was under increasing criticism from the left and centre of Australian politics for its suppression of the forces and institutions of democracy, and for the corruption and greed of the military elite. Morever, representatives of the ALP, left-wing factions and student bodies were among the first to take a close interest in the situation in Timor, particularly in Fretilin, an interest that was to both irritate and embarrass the Whitlam government.

By the end of 1974 the Indonesians were taking a harder and at times truculent line on the Timor question even in private conversation. For example, in December Mr Sabir, the deputy head of the Indonesian mission in Canberra, spoke to the author about the dangers of the emerging left in East Timor. In an aggressive statement Sabir said that if the Timorese leaders became involved in dealings with outside left-wing states 'Indonesia would have no hesitation in seizing the territory by military action'; he went on to make what turned out to be an optimistic assertion that it would have 'no difficulty whatever in annexing the colony by means of armed force'.

The propaganda campaign directed at East Timor in late 1974 and in the first quarter of 1975 has already been mentioned. This was a key operation by elements of *Operasi Komodo*, but one of the least successful. Bakin agents were placed in charge of special broadcasts from a transmitter at Atambua, with selected members of Apodeti helping to prepare material. After the London meeting, the results of which Murtopo was obviously dissatisfied with, Bakin officials decided to intensify this aspect of their disinformation activities. The operations of the Atambua station and one at Kupang were further stepped up after the Macau conference. This time the disinformation was channelled deep into the non-Fretilin political groups in East Timor, and it undoubtedly contributed decisively to the increasing tensions between

Fretilin and the other parties, as well as to the creation of public apprehension and suspicions.

During this period Indonesian agents began to visit many parts of the colony, sometimes in the guise of businessmen, sometimes as tourists or tourism officials. One of the best-known of these was Louis Taolin, who disclosed something about his role to acquaintances on several occasions. His main function appears to have been to co-ordinate the collecting of information and the work of agents in the field, but he made a number of secret visits to Atsabe, for talks with the *liurai*, Guilherme Goncalves, as well as to Bobonaro and Suai (on the south-west coast). Other agents were disguised as Timorese and sent to remote parts of the colony. Many of them were never detected, although in some cases their covers were transparently thin. In 1975, according to a local resident, one intriguing Indonesian visitor, armed with a camera, went on a tour of the main beaches of the territory, claiming that he was looking for places where he could land cattle from barges!

The aim of these activities of *Operasi Komodo* was to identify and establish key points of support, to destabilize the political situation in the province and, particularly after April 1975, to undermine and discredit Fretilin, or any supporters of the idea of independence. *Operasi Komodo* sought also to strengthen Apodeti's credibility and to create an exaggerated impression of the extent of its activities and influence. The agents thus gave close attention to identifying and to contacting *liurais* and other prominent Timorese whose bitter opposition to Fretilin, or political change in general, might tempt them to aid the Indonesian cause. And, finally, there was the task of finding out what Fretilin and the Portuguese were up to, and of gathering intelligence to facilitate a military action against the colony.

Early in 1975 the Indonesians stepped up the military side of *Operasi Komodo*, perhaps indicating the impatience of certain generals with the subversive operations. Some small exercises were followed by a major combined armed forces exercise, *Wibawa VI/ Jaya Nusa*, in South Lampung on 18 February, under the overall command of Rear-Admiral Syamsul Bachri (Commander of KOSTRAD, the Strategic Reserve). The exercise, in which naval bombardment was to be followed by a paratroop drop and a landing at Pantai Pasir Putih (perhaps a coincidence, but *pasir putih* means 'white sands', the name of a well-known beach near Dili — *Aria Branca* in Portuguese). In fact, the exercise was a near disaster: the paratroops were dropped in the wrong place, not one shell hit its target, one vessel ran aground and a P51 Mustang crashed, killing its pilot. The exercise was to have been a prelude to a landing at Dili, but the poor performance of the participating units, and subsequent exposure by an Australian

Defence Department source, designed, it seems, to warn the Indonesians that officials in Canberra knew what they were up to, led to a temporary abandonment of the idea of military action, and to the development of a more sophisticated intelligence operation, directed from West Timor, with more attention being given to political manipulation and intimidation.

This next phase of *Operasi Komodo* was also rather more subtle — and, in the end, more successful. It appears to have been based on a more realistic appreciation of the political mood of the colony, and, not least, on an apparent appraisal that support for Apodeti alone, far from helping Indonesia, was manifestly diminishing its influence and, with it, hopes that integration could be brought about by non-military means. After the Suharto–Whitlam meeting in Townsville, the Department of Foreign Affairs was to inform its minister, Senator Willesee, that the Indonesians had assured the Australian government that they were not contemplating *military* intervention, that Indonesian propaganda directed against Timor had become less strident, and that Australian intelligence reports had disclosed no evidence of preparations for *early* military action.[8] In fact, the propaganda assault was to resume less than two months later, causing one journalist (Bruce Juddery, who was visiting East Timor at the time) to report that 'the Damocles sword of Indonesian intervention once again hangs over the territory'.[9]

The shifts in the activities of the *Operasi Komodo* agents seem to have occurred in March 1975, at about the time of the London meeting and shortly after the related visit to Dili of Colonel Sugiyanto and Colonel Pitut, who had held private talks with all Timorese leaders, including those of Fretilin. In March the operation appeared to be in suspension. Their next moves reflected a more sensitive understanding of the political situation in the colony than they would probably have been able to construct from the reports of Tomodok and his staff. The Indonesians began to concentrate their attention on the right-wing parties, that is, Kota and Trabalhista as well as UDT. The right-wing leaders of UDT, especially Mousinho and Lopes da Cruz, became subjects of special interest. As has already been mentioned, da Cruz and Mousinho were invited to Jakarta in May (Fretilin leaders Horta and Alarico Fernandes were taken along separately, probably for the sake of appearances), where they were subjected to careful scrutiny by the leading personalities of *Operasi Komodo*. At the first meetings the Indonesians apparently skirted around the advantages of integration and concentrated on the increasing dangers of communist subversion in the region and the dangers for Indonesia, in particular, and on Fretilin's alleged flirtation with it. At the time they were able fortuitously to impress on the UDT leaders the threat the mounting crisis in Portugal might pose to future developments in East Timor. Indeed, at about that time reports were rife in the Western press that a communist government could at any time emerge in Lisbon. Both Mousinho and Lopes da Cruz were obviously impressed by this line of reasoning and by suggestions that they should think carefully about whether to remain in coalition with Fretilin. Indeed, these two UDT leaders later told the author that the Indonesians had urged them to consider forming an anti-communist front with Apodeti. It was clear that these arguments particularly impressed da Cruz and, according to a Portuguese official, he was won over to the cause of integration some weeks later. After his conversion the Indonesians arranged for him to visit a number of anti-communist Asian countries (including South Korea and Taiwan) at their expense. Clearly, Lopes da Cruz, with his strong anti-communism, his anti-Portuguese attitudes and his status as the leader of the second-largest party in the territory, was, from Murtopo's point of view, a prize catch, but the Indonesians were also aware that his conversion would not find favour with the majority of the UDT Central Committee. He was therefore urged not to reveal his hand. In fact, da Cruz simply could not have persuaded his party to opt for integration; to have declared his own change of heart would have been to invite the party to dismiss him. But the first major success of *Operasi Komodo* came with the collapse at the end of May of the coalition, from which UDT withdrew unilaterally.

Other subversive activities were intensified after May but the emphasis was again to change. The central target of Indonesian propaganda was now Fretilin, which was so frequently portrayed as a communist front that even foreign journalists in Jakarta began to believe it. After July, however, the real aim of the *Operasi Komodo* activists was to prevent the agreement that had emerged from the Macau meeting from getting off the ground. The subsequent Constitutional Law was hardly in breach of the understanding reached at the London meeting, but it seems that it caused the Murtopo group considerable concern. Although the law gave Apodeti a status equal to that of the other parties, the Indonesians by then had realized that the pro-integration party's support was so thin that, in the three years proposed for decolonization, the task of deterring the Timorese from the ultimate choice of independence would be completely beyond it. In those last weeks before the UDT coup the Indonesians went all out to destabilize the situation in East Timor. Some of these activities have already been discussed. Reports that the Chinese were involved in a plot inspired by Peking, that Vietnamese troops had secretly entered the country, that Soviet submarines were operating near East Timor, and that arms were being smuggled to Fretilin for the training of their 'secret army' were all deliberately fed into the already unsettled situation in the province by the propaganda apparatus of *Operasi Komodo*, or by word of mouth from Indonesian agents. The Indonesian propaganda machine also exploited reports that Fretilin, or a faction within the party, was planning a coup, a story that was of doubtful veracity. In fact, as both Xavier do Amaral and Nicolau Lobato were abroad at the time, and Horta was visiting Australia and Fiji, it is unlikely that such a move was being seriously contemplated.

Apart from disinformation, *Operasi Komodo* agents sought to get some of the *liurais* to give open support to the idea of integration. This was handled by Colonel Sugiyanto who, by this time, had become Murtopo's right-hand man. It was Sugiyanto who had won over Lopes da Cruz, and who later recruited Jose Martins as a trusted agent of Bakin. According to Hamish McDonald, who claims to have acquired this information from other Indonesian officials, 'Sugiyanto also cultivated the *liurais* (chiefs) and was later to claim that as a result of this unprecedented attention about ten of the thirteen districts were leaning towards Apodeti.'[10] In fact, only three or four of these chieftains were actually won over.

The international presentation of Indonesia's growing concern at the 'deteriorating situation' in East Timor, also stage-managed by Murtopo's *Operasi Komodo* team, made good progress after May 1975. Perhaps the Indonesians felt that the results of the Macau talks were a setback, but the international mood was increasingly favourable. President Suharto is said to have discussed the Timor problem, within the context of the 'communist threat', during his visit to the United States in mid-1975, and on his return to Jakarta he was quoted as saying that East Timor could not really become independent because it lacked economic viability. Until that time the President had avoided making any statements on the Timor question, and for this reason his remarks caused considerable disquiet in Dili, coming as they did only a matter of weeks after a reassuring statement by Adam Malik that Indonesia had 'no intention of playing rough' in dealing with the Timor problem.

The President's statement seemed to reflect a growing confidence in Jakarta that the countries that mattered to Indonesia were on side, or would go along with any move they might make to force the situation. The Australian Prime Minister was known to be aware of the Indonesian aims and to be sympathetic to them. To quote McDonald again: 'A quiet visit by the Bakin chief, Lieutenant-General Yoga Sugama, in May 1975 had sounded out, among others, Opposition Leader Malcolm Fraser, and found no reason for alarm.'[11] One interesting ally was the British ambassador to Indonesia, Sir John Archibald Ford, who on 21 July 1975, following a visit to Dili by Gordon Duggan, an officer of his embassy, reported to London in a classified cable that it was in British interests that Indonesia should incorporate East Timor as soon as possible, and that if such a move were to cause a furore in the United Nations the British should stay clear of the dispute and avoid becoming involved in action against the Indonesians.[12] The British envoy's views appear to have been shared by other representatives of Western countries well placed to influence the course of events, among them the United States, Dutch, Australian and Japanese ambassadors. Thus, with India, the Islamic nations and the ASEAN states on side, and having established that the Soviet Union had no desire to become involved in giving active support to a remote and tiny country of no strategic or political interest to it, the Indonesians canvassed the possibility of a military solution. It is clear that, until after the Fretilin victory over UDT, President Suharto remained opposed to a military solution, while even Ali Murtopo himself was at first not enthusiastic for 'a quick surgical operation'. However, the hawks, among them Generals Yoga Sugama and Benny Murdani, kept up their pressure, and were eventually able to persuade the President to authorize military intervention.

There is little doubt that the subversive and disinformation activities mounted by Murtopo's *Operasi Komodo* command, against the background of Jakarta's looming threat, were indirectly responsible for the sharp deterioration of the political situation in East Timor between May and August, and for UDT's precipitate 'show of force' which led to the civil war. There is no evidence that the Indonesians were directly involved in the planning of the UDT move, but it was a not unpredictable consequence of Indonesian meddling and subversion, of the deliberate fomenting of suspicion, conspiracy, political divisions and fear in the colony. Had circumstances been otherwise, Fretilin and UDT would not of course have had an easy relationship. However, political divisions of this kind are common, if not healthy, in a democratically organized process of decolonization, and after lengthy discussions with the leaders of both parties the writer is convinced that the differences between Fretilin and UDT could have been contained with little difficulty. But the shadow of Indonesian intervention settled over the Timorese political scene, creating disunity and distrust in an environment in which the leaders of both major parties would in other circumstances have responded to calls for negotiation and compromise. The subversive activities of *Operasi Komodo* sought to exploit and magnify out of all proportion political differences common to most decolonizations, including the experience of Indonesia itself. It was thus a cynical operation, an act of defiance of basic international principles and procedures governing relations between states, not to speak of the universally accepted right to self-determination. But to make matters worse, this naked act of subversion was made possible by the compliant attitudes of outside powers, in particular of Australia which, because of its extensive diplomatic and intelligence sources of information about Indonesia, was well aware of the existence of *Operasi Komodo*, its aims and some of its activities, within weeks of its inception. The fact that Australia did not make responsible use of this information no doubt further encouraged the Indonesian generals in their activities.

10

Invasion, occupation and resistance

The Indonesian assault on the Timorese capital, Dili, came on 7 December 1975, by coincidence the 34th anniversary of the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbour. Although it did not come as a surprise, the Indonesians also dispensed with the niceties of a declaration of war. The attack began at about 2.00 a.m., less than 24 hours after President Ford and Dr Kissinger had left Jakarta after their brief visit, the delay agreed to by the Indonesians in order to spare the American leaders the risk of embarrassment. The long-awaited assault began with a naval bombardment of positions east and west of the town, where the Indonesians believed Fretilin artillery batteries were located — information no doubt gleaned from their nocturnal sorties into the outer harbour area. The bombardment might also have been directed at light gun emplacements near the airport. Just before dawn paratroops from *Kopassandha* were dropped in the waterfront area, near the prestigious Farol residential quarter. From the very outset the operation was marred by a number of miscalculations. Some of the paratroops were dropped short, and fell into the sea, where they were to drown beneath the weight of their heavy equipment. Others found themselves under fire from other Indonesian units. Once ashore the attackers were to encounter fire from Fretilin forces in and near the city, and it was some hours before the main party of troops was landed.

The attack on Dili (codenamed *Operasi Seroja*, or 'lotus', according to Hamish McDonald, although another source, an Indonesian, continued to refer to it as *Operasi Komodo*) was under the overall command of Major-General Benny Murdani, although the officer in charge of the operation itself is reported to have been Major-General Suweno, the *Panglima* of one of Indonesia's major regional defence commands, *Kowilhan II*. According to an Indonesian military source it was 'the biggest military operation since independence', and initially comprised some 10 000 troops taken variously from *Kopassandha*, *Kopasgat*, *Korps Marinir* (the Marines), plus battalions from the *Siliwangi* (West Java) and *Brawijaya* Divisions. This sizeable force was assembled at various bases in Java and was then moved to Surabaja by troop trains travelling in the night, in order to maintain maximum secrecy. The units were staged through several different bases or centres, among them Ambon, Kupang and bases set up on the islands of Wetar and Alor especially for this operation. The original plan appears to have been to attack Dili from the west and south with the forces that had mounted the covert operation against Balibo, Maliana and later Atabai, but that particular operation had become bogged down at the Lois River, and therefore the assault on Dili was to come from the air and sea, an operation which proceeded clumsily from the very beginning. Hamish McDonald described it thus:

> It turned out a clumsy exercise which caused great civilian suffering and vastly worsened already large diplomatic problems for Jakarta. The first operational test of the new integrated armed forces command structure, it was marked by poor co-ordination and showed up serious deficiencies in the discipline, training and equipment of some of Indonesia's best units. Kostrad [the Strategic Reserve Command] Eighteenth Brigade paratroops were dropped on top of Fretilin forces withdrawing from the town, instead of behind to block off their retreat. After taking heavy casualties from Fretilin, the paratroops then came under fire from an Indonesian marine force driving inland. The remnants of the paratroops then rampaged through the town, killing and looting at random.[1]

In fact, the *Kopassandha* were not the only troops to go on the rampage. The attack on the Timorese capital, much of which was uncontested, turned out to be one of the most brutal operations of its kind in modern warfare. Hundreds of Timorese and Chinese were gunned down at random in the streets of Dili. In one such incident, a large number of Apodeti supporters, who had just been released from internment by Fretilin, went out to greet their liberators, to be machine-gunned in the street for their trouble. A number of public executions were carried out by Indonesian troops, with some of the condemned being selected at random, and others with the help of Apodeti collaborators. One of the most bizarre and gruesome of these atrocities occurred within 24 hours of the invasion and involved the killing of about 150 people. This shocking spectacle began with the execution of more than 20 women who, from various accounts, were selected at random. Some had young children who wept in distress as the soldiers tore them from the arms of their terrified mothers. The women were led out to the edge of the jetty and shot one at a time, with the crowd of shocked onlookers being forced at gun-point to count aloud as each execution took place! The process continued, many of the victims being Chinese. These killings were witnessed not only by the captive citizens of the city, but also by the distracted Bishop of Timor, who could see it all from the window of his foreshore residence. He was later to remark that the paratroops had drifted down 'like angels from the heavens', and then had behaved like 'devils'.

The gruesome spectacle at the wharf was not the only execution of its kind to take place in Dili during those early nightmarish days following the invasion. Similar killings were carried out in other parts of the capital before the senseless rampage was to subside. Not even Apodeti members were spared. About 30 supporters of the pro-integration party were shot outside the former Portuguese Military Police barracks. This party of Timorese had been sent to the barracks, and ordered to remove weapons and ammunition from it. According to a survivor of this killing, the Indonesian soldiers then asked the men which political party they belonged to. They all answered 'Apodeti', but the Indonesians opened fire on them with machine guns (which the witness believed were M16s). Most of the group died in the first volley of shooting, but the Indonesians then walked around firing at bodies that showed signs of life. Five Timorese are believed to have survived this massacre, one (now a resident of Perth) by placing his injured hand over his head, lying still, and letting the blood from the wound seep over his head.

A group of Chinese community leaders who, it seems, had come out into the street to offer some kind of welcome to the vanguard of the 'new order' were gunned down. The Chinese, who had been studiously neutral in East Timor's political conflicts — especially since the UDT coup — and who were probably more disposed than any other section of the population to come to terms with integration, were to die by the hundreds in the aftermath of the invasion. In some cases the men were separated from their families and then shot. One such incident indicated the prevailing hostility towards Australians. A spacious apartment at the top of the three-storey Toko Lay building was occupied by 22 Chinese at the time of the invasion. They had draped from their front windows a large Australian flag which the previous occupants, a group of ASIAT doctors, had given them. Clearly the Chinese hoped that the use of the flag might afford some protection to them. According to witnesses, the sight of the flag appeared to provoke the paratroops, who raced into the building where they machine-gunned the men in front of screaming, distraught women and children. The Australian flag was clearly no help to the Chinese, no doubt indicating the impact of the anti-Australian propaganda that had been fed to the troops, to the effect that Fretilin supporters were also communists, and that these included the foreigners in the territory, most of whom were from Australia. There were many other random killings of Timorese and Chinese in the streets and in houses. Apparently, faced with the orgy of indiscriminate killing, many of the residents of the capital retreated into their homes, but this was to afford them little protection. Indonesian soldiers broke into houses, especially those displaying Fretilin or even UDT flags or symbols, and in some cases shot whole families. In the suburbs near the airport soldiers resorted to hurling grenades through the doors or windows of houses crowded with frightened people, causing heavy loss of life.

One example of the many acts of senseless murder occurred near the airport where some Timorese offered coffee to a couple of paratroops who had approached the house. The soldiers accepted the coffee, drank it, handed back the cups and then shot the two men who had provided it. Another victim was a bent 80-year-old man who was taken outside and shot because someone had placed a small Fretilin flag outside his house. In yet another example of wanton killing, a member of Apodeti was shot while presenting his party identification card to a group of soldiers.

With the battle against Fretilin raging to the south and west of the city, this orgy of killing was reported to have continued for about a week. According to a Catholic priest who was in Dili after the invasion, as many as 2000 citizens of the capital, some 700 of them Chinese, were killed in the first few days of the Indonesian invasion. In a letter smuggled out of Timor some months after the invasion an elderly Chinese who had been in the territory during World War 2 wrote that the Indonesian excesses were far worse than anything he had experienced during the Japanese occupation.

And there was more in store for the Timorese when the first spate of killing was over. According to refugee accounts most of the residents of the capital were ordered to assemble at the airport, ostensibly for a residence check. This process took one whole day, but when the people returned to their houses they were to discover the real reason for the muster. Their homes had been ransacked by the occupying troops, and all objects of any value had been removed. One Timorese woman told the author that, in her case, the looting had not stopped at radios and furniture — even the windows had been removed. All of this loot, together with any vehicles and motorcycles the troops could lay their hands on, was taken to ships in Dili Harbour, and shipped to Java. And then, to round off the orgiastic nightmare, the troops demanded women and girls to help them celebrate their victory. The female relatives of Fretilin members, and members of OPMT and UNETIM, Timorese women's and students' organizations linked with Fretilin,* were singled out for particularly harsh treatment. Most were arrested and imprisoned, some of them in a section of the Hotel

* OPMT — *Organizacao Popular da Mulher Timor* (The Popular Organization of Timorese Women); UNITEM — *Uniao Nacional de Estudantes de Timor* (The National Union of Timorese Students).

Tropical in the centre of Dili. According to several Timorese who had managed to visit some OPMT prisoners, some of them had ugly scars on their breasts from cigarette burns inflicted on them by Bakin torturers. One visitor to the prison who saw some of the women about six months after the invasion was told by inmates that they had been raped repeatedly, and that about half of them were pregnant.

The demands made by the troops for young women were said to have been a daily occurrence, and such requests were not to be trifled with. Some men were killed because they objected vigorously to such demands, and many others were severely beaten or imprisoned because they refused to surrender their daughters.

Church and community leaders appealed to the senior Indonesian officers to put a stop to the killing, but there was little response. Dading Kalbuadi coldly reminded one of them that this was war, and people got killed in war. Some Indonesian officers were troubled at the brutal and undisciplined behaviour of the troops, but told Timorese leaders that they were powerless to put a stop to it. Even officials in Jakarta felt obliged to admit, usually privately, that some excesses had occurred in the course of the invasion, but claimed that the troops concerned were subsequently disciplined and that order was soon restored, a standard explanation later repeated by Australian and United States officials when questioned closely about the attack. In fact, the rape of Dili was only the beginning. When the towns of Liquica and Maubara were eventually wrested from Fretilin's control the Indonesians put to death nearly all members of their Chinese communities. When they finally forced Fretilin to withdraw from Aileu, Indonesian troops, in a brutal public spectacle, machine-gunned the remaining population of the town, except for children under the age of four, who were sent back to Dili in trucks. These infant survivors were ultimately to be placed in an orphanage near Jakarta, where the 'poor victims of the Fretilin terror' were to become the subject of the charitable indulgence of Tien Harto, the President's wife, and her coterie of bored wives of the affluent and powerful in the Indonesian capital.

One early victim of the Indonesian attack on Dili was another Australian journalist, Roger East. East was a man of long and varied experience in his profession; he was something of an adventurer who had worked in Cyprus, Spain, China and England, as well as in Australia. There he had gone from being publicity officer for the Country Party in a Queensland electorate to the post of press officer for the Darwin Reconstruction Board, an organization set up in the aftermath of the devastation caused by Cyclone Tracy. It was while he was in Darwin that his interest in Timor first began, but his decision to go there was said to have been motivated by his outrage at the killing of the newsmen at Balibo. Early in November East set off for Dili and, with the encouragement of the Fretilin leaders, he launched an East Timor news agency. Fretilin obviously felt that its message was not getting across to the outside world, though, in fact, this was hardly the fault of the existing AAP-Reuter representation in Dili, which was in the capable hands of the young Australian journalist Jill Jolliffe.

There can be little doubt that Roger East went to Timor with a commitment to Fretilin, but probably a commitment to it as the major Timorese political force rather than as a political party of his own persuasion. There was never any doubt about the fact that his commitment to Fretilin was as a journalist and not as a soldier of fortune, or mercenary, which some Indonesians were later to suggest. Before leaving Darwin he was reported to have told his sister: 'These people have been betrayed. Someone's got to go and get the truth out.'[2] But he also made it clear that he was not going there to fight for the Timorese. His brother Bill apparently urged him to arm himself in the event of an Indonesian attack, but his reply was that he 'was too old for that, he had lived too long with just a typewriter'.[3]

Roger East developed a deep affection for the Timorese during those weeks leading up to the invasion of Dili, and when Australian authorities advised their nationals to leave the territory he was the only Australian in Dili to ignore the advice. It must have been a decision he made with his eyes open, because he had already been named in the strident propaganda from the *Operasi Komodo* station in West Timor as a communist who would share the fate of his colleagues who had been killed at Balibo. He ignored the attempts of his friends and acquaintances to persuade him to return to Darwin, and appears to have planned initially to join Fretilin in the mountains, where he intended to continue to report the war in Timor to the outside world. He was last seen by Australians on the eve of the invasion, on 6 December, by members of the International Red Cross team who were about to leave for the island of Atauro. According to Jill Jolliffe, who herself was one of the last to leave, he was still staying at the Hotel Turismo, which faces the beach, and had not taken up an invitation from the Fretilin leaders to move to the south of the town, presumably in readiness for their withdrawal from the capital.[4] Why East did not follow this advice is not clear, but one plausible explanation is that he delayed his own retreat to the very end in order to send some first-hand reports of the initial attack via the Marconi, the city's telecommunications centre, which was located near the waterfront. Apparently East managed to send a short dispatch about an hour after the Indonesian forces began their landing, but for some reason the Australian AAP-Reuter office never made use of it, and no record was kept. Perhaps the message was garbled, as the Indonesian troops would already have been in the vicinity of the centre, which was one of their early objectives, at the time East was trying to send it out. His last recorded dispatch was received only a matter of hours before the invasion, and it described how the capital had become quiet and almost deserted as many of the Timorese streamed out of the town heading for the comparative safety of the mountains.

There have been a number of accounts of just how Roger East died, the first from Fretilin not long after the invasion and the latest in October 1980, from two Chinese who had just managed to get to Portugal from Timor. In spite of a few discrepancies in some of these accounts, it is possible to put together a rough reconstruction of how and when the Australian journalist was killed. It seems probable that, after having handed in his last dispatch, East went to an apartment not far from the Marconi Centre, where he may have intended to prepare a detailed report on the invasion, before moving to the hills. This apartment was located near where the Indonesian attacking force had a brush with Fretilin troops and sustained some casualties. It is probable that the Fretilin contingent involved in this skirmish was the party sent by the Timorese leaders in a desperate and ill-fated last-minute bid to rescue East. In the event, the troops, who were led by Fernando Carmo, one of East Timor's best military commanders, ran into an Indonesian paratroop unit and, after bitter hand-to-hand fighting, was itself wiped out. It was not long before the Australian journalist was intercepted by the Indonesians in the vicinity of the apartment, and from there he was taken to the execution site at the wharf. A Chinese witness later recounted that on the morning of 8 December he saw a European, whose description resembled that of East, being dragged to the wharf by three Indonesian soldiers.[5] The captive's hands were bound with wire but he continued to struggle while the soldiers kicked him and prodded him with their bayonets. And during this ordeal East apparently hurled a constant stream of abuse at his captors. Another Chinese recorded the Australian's execution at the wharf. He was standing only a few metres away when East was brought before the Indonesian firing squad. According to this account, Roger East was forced to stand on the edge of the wharf, and was ordered to face the sea. But he refused to comply with this order, turned around, and, facing the Indonesians, shouted: 'I am not Fretilin, I am an Australian.' However, his shouts were ignored and he was then shot down by the squad, who, from their shoulder badges, were members of 501 Battalion, a unit of the East Java *Brawijaya* Division. East's body fell into the sea, and was presumably among the many corpses that were later washed up on the Aria Branca ('White Sands') beach, which is located to the east of the capital.

The case of Roger East's disappearance was treated with a mixture of disdain and arrogance by the Indonesian authorities, who nevertheless finally agreed to take up the matter with the forces of the 'Provisional Government of East Timor'. It was then claimed that no one had sighted any trace of the journalist. Indeed, for a time the Indonesians were suggesting that he had gone to the mountains with the Fretilin forces. One curious report came from Jakarta years later — from an Indonesian army officer who claimed to have seen a report on the execution of the Australian journalist, a report that had said that East was a communist and had been carrying a weapon when apprehended. Apart from the execution, the circumstances, as described, seem improbable, and it is possible that this 'leak' was contrived by certain officials, with the aim of disposing of one of the several embarrassing incidents which continued to affect the Canberra–Jakarta relationship. The enquiries carried out by the Department of Foreign Affairs have hardly been exhaustive or enthusiastically followed up. Admittedly the circumstances were anything but conducive to fruitful investigation. However, after the testimony of the Chinese witnesses in 1980 the Department of Foreign Affairs raised the matter with the Indonesian government and, predictably, were told bluntly that there was no truth in the accounts given by Pedro Lay and Chong Keiu Nhan. Indonesian troops had not shot Roger East, Australian officials were told.

The case of Roger East followed a pattern very similar to the Balibo killings. There is a great deal of evidence, of a damning though circumstantial kind, that most of the six newsmen, who died within a period of less than two months, were virtually murdered by Indonesian troops — in fact were deliberately murdered not because they were combatants, or were in any way involved in the armed resistance to Indonesian aggression on behalf of Fretilin, but because had they been allowed to live they could have exposed the truth about Indonesia's intervention. Not a word of formal protest appears to have been lodged by the Australian government, perhaps not just because this would have antagonized the Indonesians, but because it would have forced Australia to end its tacit complicity in this sordid affair.

Not all the residents of Dili were treated with such disregard. The Apodeti leader, Arnaldo dos Reis Araujo, was quickly freed and moved to a safe place. Special treatment was also given to Jose Goncalves, the DRET's Minister for Economic Coordination, who had chosen to remain in Dili for health reasons. Goncalves' protector was his father, Guilherme, the *liurai* of Atsabe and a leader of Apodeti. But this protection did not extend beyond his son's immediate family. Jose Goncalves' sister-in-law, the wife of Nicolau Lobato, was dragged off by Indonesian troops to the execution site at the wharf, where she, too, was shot. After some hard negotiation her small son's life was spared and he has since been adopted by Jose Goncalves and his wife.

When the Indonesian attack began the remnants of Portugal's colonial administration, with a small contingent of troops, were still ensconsed on the island of Atauro, where two Portuguese corvettes, the *Joao Roby* and the *Afonso Cerquiera*, were at anchor. The presence of these warships had caused the Indonesian naval planners some concern. The corvettes were modern, having not long been commissioned by the Portuguese, and, according to the later remarks of a senior Indonesian naval officer, had they intervened, they could have blown Indonesia's ships out of the water. But the Indonesians need not have worried. The ships' officers and the remaining officials of the administration merely acted as passive witnesses to the attack on Dili which could be observed clearly from the island. The radar screens of the corvettes picked up the Indonesian aircraft and with the help of powerful binoculars the officers were able to follow the outline of the attack. Eventually, the Portuguese decided to abandon Atauro and sail to Darwin. They were to have left at 6.30 a.m. on 8 December, but the anchor of one of the vessels had become embedded in a coral outcrop and the departure was delayed for some twelve hours. Thus, at 6.30 p.m. on 8 December, Portugal ignominiously withdrew from its most remote colonial outpost, to which its daring explorers had first ventured more than 460 years earlier. In some respects the termination of its long colonial tutelage was an extraordinary anticlimax. The Portuguese were forced out of this particular colony not by impatient nationalists — on the contrary, the Timorese leaders had tried to entice them to return — but by the aggression of a neighbouring power, which had publicly denied any claim to East Timor. The corvettes and a group of Portuguese officers were to linger in Darwin for several months in the hope that international reaction to Indonesia's assault on their colony might eventually prompt Jakarta to order the withdrawal of its forces. But, as we shall see, Indonesian determination to integrate East Timor remained unshaken; in the face of the weakening resolve of the international community, the Portuguese, with few apparent regrets, withdrew, probably for all time, their colonial presence in South-east Asia.

The resistance put up by Fretilin in the streets of Dili was little more than a delaying tactic. But on the outskirts of the town the Timorese troops staunchly held their ground, and the invasion forces were pinned down for several weeks. On 10 December a second invading force was landed at Baucau, in order to secure East Timor's second-largest town, and to gain control of the territory's main airfield, whose strip was designed to accommodate modern commercial jet aircraft. For some reason Fretilin had established only a light defence force at Baucau and the Indonesians were able to acquire control of the town and the airport with little fighting and little loss of life. The town is located on the edge of a high plain, and it might have been that, after the experience of Balibo, the Timorese forces felt that the defence of Baucau was beyond their means. Nevertheless, the Falintil soon began to mount guerrilla attacks on Indonesian positions from bases in the nearby mountains and hills.

Meanwhile, in the Dili area, the Indonesians found themselves pinned down on the small coastal plain between Tibar to the west and the rugged hills projecting out to Aria Branca to the east. With field and naval guns they pounded the Falintil positions in the mountains to the south, but the Timorese were continuously on the move, and sustained relatively few casualties during this early period. Within two weeks of the attack on Dili, the Indonesians must have realized that their campaign to integrate the Portuguese colony was going to involve a long and bitter struggle. Fretilin had at its disposal an army of about 20 000 men — a hard professional core of some 2500 regular troops, another 7000 who had obtained military training under the Portuguese, and a further 10 000 or so who had been given courses of military instruction of much shorter duration. In addition to this number the Falintil had itself been giving military training to Timorese villagers since October. It was, in a sense, a 'people's army'. None of the Fretilin commanders had been tutored on military tactics or strategy at staff colleges, and none had command experience other than in junior posts (mostly non-commissioned) prior to the civil war, but several had already emerged as shrewd and inspiring leaders, especially in the prevailing guerrilla warfare conditions. One of the ablest, Fernando Carmo, was killed in the futile attempt to rescue Roger East but commanders like Alves, Soares and Nicolau Lobato himself were soon to demonstrate their calibre. Their troops were to keep sizeable Indonesian forces at bay for the next four years or so, and to inflict heavy casualties on them.

One advantage at the outset was the fact that the Portuguese had recently replenished their arsenal in East Timor with a wide range of modern NATO-type light weaponry. The Falintil was thus well equipped. In fact, when the writer once reminded Lobato that the ACFOA mission was concerned with humanitarian and not military aid, the Timorese leader retorted impatiently: 'The one thing we don't need is military aid.' The Falintil had also benefited enormously from the experience it had gained in countering *Operasi Komodo*'s covert operations under Colonel Dading since the previous October, operations which had in fact achieved precious little for Indonesia. The Timorese had become conditioned to artillery and rocket fire, to Indonesian tactics in the field, and they had gained vital experience in the kind of guerrilla fighting most suitable to their situation. In practice, the Timorese leaders had already learnt not to become drawn into battles in which they risked being cut off and isolated, or into engagements with Indonesian units whose superior firepower could inflict heavy casualties and material losses on the exposed Timorese forces. Well before the attack on Dili, as has already been described, Fretilin had been preparing itself for the life-and-death guerrilla campaign that eventually was to follow. Stocks of food, arms and ammunition had been transported to hide-outs in the mountain regions, most of them well away from roads that would eventually facilitate the penetration of Indonesian forces with tanks and other armoured vehicles.

It soon became apparent to the Indonesian operational command — which was accorded Kodam* status — that an even larger military operation would have to be mounted if Fretilin was to be overpowered, and if the ABRI (*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia* — Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia) were to move beyond the precincts of Dili and Baucau. And so substantial reinforcements — involving 10 000 to 15 000 troops — were ordered into the fray around Christmas Day and Boxing Day 1975, and additional landings were made at Liquica and Maubara, with massacres of the civilian population being carried out in both towns. Thus, by the end of the year more than 20 000 Indonesian troops were in the small territory. According to an Indonesian source, by April the numbers had risen to some 35 000 soldiers. The Indonesian wrote: 'A big portion from all the elite/comando [*sic*] troops have been sent to Timor, like the red berets (RPKAD), orange berets (*Kopasgat*), violet berets (*Korps Marinir*/KKO), plus troops from Java (especially from West Java (*Siliwangi*) and East Java (*Brawijaya*).'[6] This source made the interesting comment that *Diponegoro* (Central Java) units had not been sent to Timor because they were 'Suharto's troops'. Was this an indication that the President was still resolved to distance himself from the Timor operation? The above description of the Timor force was supported by a statement in April from the Australian MP, Ken Fry, who quoted intelligence estimates in Australia. He said that there were some 42 000 troops in the whole of Timor, 32 000 in East Timor and another 10 000 in the western half of the island.

In spite of the presence of this formidable force, which was well supported by aircraft and naval units, the Indonesians made only very slow progress. Two of their most important targets, the towns of Aileu and Ermera, the centre of the coffee industry, did not fall into their hands for three months. Aileu was taken in February, while

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* *Komando Daerah Militar*. The Kodam is a regional command, usually covering a province, or in some cases two provinces.

Ermera was not captured until 9 April 1976. Ainaro, in the south, was abandoned by Fretilin on 21 February, and the Indonesian forces entered Lospalos in the east a few days later. But after four months of heavy fighting the invading forces were still in control of only a few small pockets, with the Fretilin forces moving freely throughout most of the country. A Timorese who had served as a guide and interpreter to one of the senior Indonesian military officers later told the writer that, in the early months of the fighting, as the Indonesian forces moved into the central regions, they killed most Timorese they encountered, and many of the hamlets were burnt to the ground.[7] Fretilin forces continued to attack and ambush the Indonesian infantry and casualties soon began to mount. The main hospital in Dili was completely taken over by the army, and its wards were full, with many patients being sent back to Gatot Subroto and other military hospitals in Java. This high casualty rate was referred to in the letter from the Indonesian source already cited. He wrote:

> Actually, it is no secret anymore [*sic*] in Indonesia. Especially in Jakarta, where the Army hospital (RS Gatot Subroto) and the Airforce hospital at Halim airbase is [*sic*] overflooded with war victims. And what makes it more tragic is that the families — even their wives — are not allowed to visit their husbands in the hospital. At the same time, news that many Indonesian soldiers were killed by the Timorese is just trickling down in Jakarta and the whole of Java. So knowing that your husband, son or father has to go to Timor is nearly as shocking as a death trial/penalty.

For all parties, then, the Timor campaign had a bloody beginning. Although few Timorese were in favour of integration, there can be little doubt that the rapacious and brutal behaviour of the occupying forces greatly stiffened the resolve of the resistance and provided Fretilin with a degree of popular support greater than it might otherwise have enjoyed. After the savagery of the first days of the invasion, tens of thousands of Timorese fled from their homes to the relative sanctuary of the mountain regions behind Fretilin lines. And they included thousands who had hitherto been supporters of UDT and Apodeti. A striking example of the extent of this exodus was contained in a letter written by a Timorese official in the Baucau area (which before the invasion had a population of 85 000) at the end of 1976 to the governor of the Province.[8] He reported that 32 000 people in his district 'had presented themselves' to Indonesian forces between 10 December and the end of the following February, but that, because of the excesses of the occupying troops, only 9646 remained, the rest having subsequently fled to the mountains. A visitor to Ainaro a couple of months earlier reported that there were no Timorese left in the town. The atrocities committed in Dili, Maubara and Liquica caused entire populations of neighbouring towns and villages to abandon their homes and seek refuge behind Fretilin lines. For most people it seems to have been a reluctant and desperate choice, and the writer has never encountered any evidence to support the later Indonesian contention that Fretilin troops forced the civilian population to flee to the mountains with them, a contention sometimes repeated by U.S. and Australian officials. On the contrary, Fretilin leaders were to become concerned at their inability to cope with the basic needs of more than half a million people, with limited food supplies and few medicines, and without doctors. Indeed, as the war intensified the Timorese leaders tried to encourage some of this large displaced civilian population to return to the Indonesian-occupied areas, in an attempt to ease the pressure on the dwindling food supplies at their disposal.

It is hard to understand why the Indonesians behaved with such disregard for the rights and welfare of the Timorese, when they had so much to gain — internationally as well as in Timor — by treating the Timorese with understanding and respect. There are, however, a number of explanations. Generals Murdani and Suweno are reported to have ordered their troops to crack down on all opposition, in the hope that this would weaken support for the resistance and bring an early end to the fighting. Individual commanders also reportedly incited hatred of the Timorese through the propaganda they fed to their troops in an effort to strengthen their fighting spirit. Some were told that they were fighting communists, while others were given to understand that they were embarking on a *Jihad*, or holy war, against Timorese Christians. The language barrier presented a serious problem. The Indonesians spoke neither Portuguese nor Tetum, and the Timorese had no knowledge of Bahasa Indonesia. But the language problem merely masked a deeper-rooted cultural difference. In religion, some 90 per cent of the Timorese with whom the Indonesian soldiers first came into contact were Christians, especially the residents of the towns and larger villages. The vast majority of the Indonesian soldiers, on the other hand, were Moslems from Java, and the only Moslems that the Timorese had encountered were the members of the tiny 'Arab' community near Dili, who kept to themselves and were generally regarded as having a lower status in local society. Then there was the traditional fear and dislike of the Javanese, a tradition kept alive not only by the Portuguese, but also by stories from Timorese on the Indonesian side of the island, many of whom bore a deep resentment of their political domination by the Javanese through the *Pemerintah Pusat* ('central government'). On the Indonesian side, there have been reports that many soldiers viewed their operation as a further phase in the ongoing campaign to suppress communism that had followed the events of September 1965

(*Gestapu*), and they set about this task with similar brutality and indiscriminate killing. Fear of Indonesia existed before the invasion on 7 December but after the terrible experiences of the East Timorese at the callous hands of the invading troops it was transformed into a deep-seated hatred which made the 'pacification' of East Timor a particularly unpleasant as well as dangerous ordeal for the Indonesian soldiers. This aspect was alluded to in the letter from Indonesia previously referred to, which remarked: 'When I saw troops coming back from Timor last month (red berets) I was not surprised to see them so delighted, released, talkative, because they have escaped from hell.'

However, the presence of such hostility and the lack of any popular support for *integrasi* did not deter the Indonesians from proceeding with what must be one of the most cynical deceptions of its kind, rivalling Nazi Germany's excuse for the seizure of Sudetenland, or, for that matter, of Czechoslovakia. In the first place, the Indonesians denied that there was any invasion at all: anti-Fretilin forces — who, if one accepted the Indonesian propaganda build-up prior to the invasion, had been converging on Dili from the west and south — had forced Fretilin out of the city and Indonesian 'volunteers' had been sent to Timor at their request. In reality, the small band of Timorese collaborators played an even less significant role in the invasion of Dili than they had done at Balibo seven weeks earlier. The Kota leader, Jose Martins, told the writer that he and several of his colleagues were at Atabai, far away from Dili, when the invasion was launched.

After the invasion the Indonesians brought most of the leaders to Dili where a 'Provisional Government of East Timor' (PGET) was set up, under Arnaldo dos Reis Araujo, with Tomas Goncalves, Mario Carrascalao, Jose Goncalves (formerly of Fretilin) and Lopes da Cruz as its 'ministers'. According to Indonesian propaganda, the PGET had been set up after the 'anti-Fretilin forces' had taken the capital, and its troops were then preoccupied with the task of mopping up Fretilin remnants in the mountains — with, of course, a little help from the Indonesian volunteers. In truth, the PGET had no army, no bureaucracy and precious little political support. After the invasion, in which the so-called 'anti-Fretilin forces' played no part, the Indonesians banned UDT and the splinter groups, and began to construct their pro-integration political facade around Apodeti. For a few months the PGET was given an aura of independence by the Indonesian generals. Any enquiries about the situation in East Timor, such as the whereabouts of Roger East, and the request by the United Nations secretary-general for a special envoy to be admitted to the territory, were supposedly relayed by Jakarta to the PGET for a decision. In fact, the writer was told by Timorese officials who were in Dili at the time that the PGET had no separate existence or powers at all. It was under the constant direction of officers like Brigadier-General Dading (promoted some time after the Balibo/Maliana operation) and a tough Sumatran called Colonel Sinaga, with Sugiyanto continuing his 'liaison' activities. According to one Timorese leader, not only were some of the PGET's press releases, which surfaced in Jakarta, written by their Indonesian tutors, but a few were prepared without even consulting the Timorese collaborators. In a few cases they were not even seen by the PGET ministers until after their release. In those first few months all activities, foreign contacts, demonstrations, and so on, were carefully orchestrated and controlled. To assist the Bakin officers, a special group of Indonesians were brought into East Timor, mostly from nearby islands, who closely resembled the Timorese. On the rare occasions when foreign visitors came to the territory, these 'Timorese' were always present, to tell the visitors just what the Indonesian military wanted them to know. An operation of this kind was mounted, as we have seen, for the benefit of the Australian diplomats sent to investigate the killing of the newsmen at Balibo.

When international pressure began to mount unexpectedly in the wake of the invasion certain prominent Timorese were sent abroad to international centres considered important by Jakarta. But before they left, their wives and families were placed in special custody 'for Indonesia's security', as the briefing colonel from Bakin told them. Thus, Mario Carrascalao, Jose Martins and Jose Goncalves were sent to the United Nations, Joao Carrascalao was sent to the Middle East, Paolo Pires to the Netherlands, and another emissary to Japan; their task was to convince their audiences that integration reflected the wishes of the majority of the Timorese, and that Indonesia had not invaded their territory. The exercise did not work as well as the Indonesians had intended. Most of the Timorese were still in a state of near shock, after having witnessed, or heard about, the rape of Dili (Jose Goncalves was still upset at the execution of his sister-in-law). At least two of the group, Paolo Pires and Joao Carrascalao, tried to convey something of the real situation in the former Portuguese colony, but the Indonesians found out about their 'perfidy' and reacted with anger. Carrascalao was placed under house arrest at Kupang, where he was to remain until shortly before he was repatriated to Portugal in mid-1976. Pires also managed to get to Portugal. In January the Kota leader, Jose Martins, who had been held in high trust by Bakin, began to disengage himself from the Indonesian embrace, and in the following March he formally 'defected' at the United Nations where he submitted a confidential report on the real extent of Indonesian involvement in East Timor.[9] Another Timorese member of the delegation sent to the U.N. became very distressed in New York and was taken to hospital. The Indonesians apparently suspected that he might defect, and, in an extraordinary episode, two members of the embassy staff went to the New York hospital and successfully arranged for the Timorese to be handed over to them. He was then quietly and quickly flown back to Jakarta!

Meanwhile, Indonesia continued to report via Jakarta or Kupang new successes of the non-existent PGET armed forces. Thus, on 1 February 1976 the *Indonesian Times* reported that 'PGET forces have liberated the towns of Suai, Zumalai, Ainaro, Betano, Same, Beaco, Uatolari, Lospalos, Tutuala, Lautem, Matudo, Maibesse, Turiscai, Baquai [Baguia, presumably] and Iliomar without any resistance'. The report also carried a bold threat for a government without troops, ships or aircraft, in short, without armed forces. It said: 'The Armed Forces of the PGET have instructed the shooting of any aircraft and warships approaching East Timor in order to maintain security in the newly liberated areas.' On 9 January Adam Malik himself made a lightning visit to Dili, accompanied by a few Indonesian and selected foreign journalists. The reception was carefully orchestrated by the military occupation authorities: thousands of troops were deployed beyond the outskirts of the town to prevent Fretilin troops from disrupting the occasion, military vehicles were moved out of sight and a reception was set up with a liberal sprinkling of Indonesian troops in civilian clothes among the crowd. From the few independent accounts it was a spiritless occasion. One of the journalists was the late Tony Joyce of the ABC, who later reported: 'It would be hard to call the Dili welcome a spontaneous demonstration of the feelings of the Timorese people. From the start Mr Malik's flying visit was carefully stage-managed. In Dili about 1000 people were assembled outside Government House. On cue about every five minutes the crowd raised their red and white Indonesian flags and shouted pro-Indonesian slogans.'[10] But Mr Malik himself recounted the occasion so differently it is hard to believe that the two were describing the same function! When he returned to Jakarta he was reported as telling the Indonesian press that 'the enthusiasm of the people of East Timor for integration with Indonesia is overflowing greatly and cannot be held back. . . . Their system of administration is already the same as that of Indonesia. Security is quite certainly assured, because it is indeed peaceful there'.[11]

In February it was announced that on 31 January all of the political parties had 'dissolved themselves' and that a new unified party had been created. In a statement before the Security Council, Guilherme Goncalves announced that a 'deliberative council' had also been established 'to help the provisional government in reaching important decisions'. According to Goncalves, this council, to which he had been appointed chairman, would perform the functions of a provisional assembly, pending the setting up of a 'People's Assembly'. And so a People's Assembly was subsequently formed, not as an elected body, but, in the words of a PGET statement, in keeping with 'the traditions and identity of the people of East Timor', suggesting a representative process by means of consensus and consent. This Assembly was described as being composed of 'prominent citizens of East Timor', complemented by 'representatives from the *concelhos*', and including *chefes de suco*, *liurais*, and representatives of religious groups. What really happened was that Indonesian intelligence officers, usually accompanied by Apodeti officials, summoned local rulers and, in some cases, simply directed them to become members of the Assembly. The subsequent 'elections' were openly rigged, with Timorese being rounded up by Indonesian troops and escorted to polling booths, where their votes were cast under the careful scrutiny of the occupation forces. On 31 May it was announced that a 37-member 'Popular Representative Assembly' had, at its first meeting, unanimously approved a petition to the Indonesian president for the territory to be integrated into the Republic of Indonesia, after less than two hours' discussion of the proposal. This meeting was witnessed by a number of foreign diplomats and some twenty Indonesian and foreign journalists, who spent about three hours in Dili in yet another carefully stage-managed visit. This time, apart from temporarily removing all signs of Indonesia's military presence, the occupying forces took away several hundred grave markers from a square near the wharf which had been converted into an Indonesian military cemetery.

The next step in this extraordinary 'act of free choice' was for a 'petition' from the Popular Assembly to be presented to President Suharto. This was done in grand style. A 44-man delegation, which included the entire Popular Assembly as well as the PGET, was flown to Jakarta and on 7 June 1976 the petition for integration was ceremoniously handed to the Indonesian leader. In accepting it, President Suharto said that before the act of integration was completely formalized Indonesia wished once again 'to ascertain the wishes of the people of East Timor'. He told the deputation that, 'with the consent of our brothers in East Timor', a mission would be sent from Jakarta for the express purpose of making an on-the-spot assessment of the wishes of the Timorese, so that 'a quick and firm decision' could be taken on the question. Therefore, yet another layer was added to the facade of East Timor's act of free choice. This time a government mission, led by the Minister for Home Affairs, Amir Machmud, went to the territory, but again the visit was very brief, and would hardly have allowed time for its members to probe beneath the surface calm secured by the military occupation — that is, if any delegates had been so disposed. Indeed, this was clearly not the delegation's role. Amir Machmud admitted as much before the group left Dili: 'My delegation does not come here to investigate, check or test the authority of the petition for integration with Indonesia.' As in the case of the May visit a number of representatives of foreign missions were included in the entourage — but not including officials from Australia or the United States. Once again a reception was carefully stage-managed, a performance at which the occupying authorities were soon to become expert. The Indonesian troops were moved out of the suburb of Farol, where they were occupying most of the houses; some went to the hills behind the capital to ensure that Fretilin did not threaten the proceedings, while others donned civilian clothes and helped make up the crowd, to ensure that it behaved in keeping with the contrived spirit of the occasion. These troops were also instructed to see to it that the Timorese, especially the bolder dissidents, did not make contact with foreigners or the press. A number of former UDT leaders who had become very critical of Indonesia's occupation were thus imprisoned for the duration of the visit. The other townspeople were ordered out into the streets to take part in pro-integration demonstrations. Timorese prisoners, who were incarcerated in at least three places, were moved away from the city.

The sombre welcome of the Timorese does not seem to have made any impression on Amir Machmud, who made the surprising statement that 'the wish for integration with Indonesia was decided by the whole people of this territory'. He then went on to assure his captive audience, as was subsequently reported in the *Indonesian Times*, that 'the Republic of Indonesia would not disappoint the hopes of the people of East Timor for swift integration with Indonesia on the basis of Pancasila [the five principles on which the Indonesian Republic is based] and the 1945 Constitution'.[12] The Minister promised the confused and bewildered Timorese that his delegation would do everything in its power 'to make the process of integration as smooth and as quick as possible'. The diplomats who elected to join this 'fact-finding mission' were a curious collection. They included the South Korean, Malaysian, Iranian and Syrian ambassadors, the charges d'affaires of Afghanistan and Iraq, and lower-ranking representatives from Panama, South Yemen and India. The facts presumably were not hard to ascertain, because the whole visit took little more than one day! The act of free choice was a very thin and transparent exercise. More than two-thirds of the population of the territory was behind Fretilin lines, and, according to Timorese who were officials in the PGET at the time, only a handful of those in occupied zones had any enthusiasm for the future that was being forcibly imposed on them.

A confidential report written to President Suharto by the pro-Indonesian governor, Arnaldo dos Reis Araujo, provides an interesting insight into the real situation in June 1976, that is, on the very eve of the formal act of integration.[13] Araujo complained that his government was completely subordinate to the Indonesian army leaders, who displayed no confidence in it. He said that, although some Timorese had greeted the Indonesian troops as liberators, their support had changed to opposition with the killing of members of the pro-Indonesian Apodeti. The Governor lamented to the Indonesian president:

> We concede that the looting of private businesses, government offices and the state treasury could be due to the emotions of war, but it is difficult to understand why it continues six months after, leaving everybody in a state of cruel insecurity, that they may lose the little of their savings which have escaped from foreign hands. . . . Day and night, at my home and office, widows, orphans, children and cripples come begging for milk and clothing. I can do nothing but join my tears to theirs, because the provisional Government owns nothing.

His comment on the position of businesses is interesting:

> In Dili 130 business houses have already reopened, but none are under the control of their previous owners, or the Timorese people, and are causing inflation of around 500 to 1,000%. The articles displayed raise many doubts about their origins.

The report also made some revealing comments on the housing situation.

> The military continues to use private houses, leaving the former colonial army barracks vacant, and we have to take into consideration that thousands of refugees are still living in schools, government offices and clinics.

This then was a leading collaborator's description of some aspects of life under the *Orde Baru*, at about the time Minister Amir Machmud had proclaimed that the desire for integration was an expression of the will 'of the whole people of this territory'.

It was at first believed that East Timor would be declared Indonesia's 27th Province on the country's national day, 17 August, but the whole process was rushed forward, in an obvious attempt to present the United Nations and the world at large with a *fait accompli*, before the following General Assembly session. Thus, on 16 July, a month earlier than expected, the Indonesian Parliament dutifully passed a bill incorporating the Portuguese colony into Indonesia, and on the following day the bill was signed into law, completing the legal formalities of what must have been the most cynical and contrived denial of the right of self-determination in the entire postwar process of decolonization. Most of those countries which had initially reacted angrily to the invasion had by now accepted that East Timor's integration was a *fait accompli*. The Indonesians were thus able to exploit the existence of an uninformed and uninterested international community to confirm that status, into which most of those countries who had reacted angrily after the invasion had already placed the Timor problem.

Not surprisingly, the spoils of office went to the small band of Timorese who were trusted supporters of Indonesia. On 4 August Arnaldo dos Reis Araujo, the PGET puppet leader, was appointed governor of the 27th Province, and Lopes da Cruz, deputy governor. Guilherme Goncalves became chairman of the Provisional DPRD (the *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah*, or Regional People's Representative Council). Other trusted Timorese, such as Joao Tavares and Tomas Goncalves were appointed *bupatis* of the district subdivisions. The *concelhos* now became *kebupatan* to conform with the Indonesian equivalent level of territorial administration. In fact, this facade of self-rule was as thin as the act of free choice itself. East Timor was virtually under military occupation, and the most powerful man in all matters of administration was Brigadier-General Dading Kalbuadi, now the *panglima*, or territorial commander. The local DPR was managed by Colonel Sinaga, called the 'Black God' by the Timorese who feared and disliked him. It was therefore something of an extravagant exaggeration for the Indonesians to announce some months later that, following the unanimous request of the Timorese DPR, Sinaga had been appointed its secretary, who is known as the *sekwilda*.

Meanwhile, the Indonesians had kept up a steady flow of propaganda about the rapidly improving situation in the territory, and the steadily weakening position of Fretilin which, according to Jakarta, had been reduced to a number of terrorist bands. The real situation was very different. For example, on 3 May 1976 Jakarta reported that the East Timorese were now clamouring to join Indonesia and, as the *Indonesian Times* put it, 'no power in the world can check the desire of the East Timorese to join the Republic of Indonesia'. Yet at about that time, when rumours spread that emigration to Portugal could be arranged through the Dutch embassy and the International Red Cross, some 27 000 Timorese applied within a week or so to leave Timor, before the Indonesians put a stop to the recording of this flood of applications, and demanded that the list be scrapped.

On the eve of the act of integration life in the occupied areas of the territory continued to be grim and insecure. Most of the Timorese in the capital were concentrated in a few centres, their houses having been looted and occupied by Indonesian soldiers. As one priest who visited Dili at the time commented: 'There were no signs of external bombardment; just houses cleaned out from inside.'[14] Most people had just enough food for one small meal, usually of cassava and rice, each day. There was practically no meat available, and the capital's sizeable colony of dogs had all but disappeared, most of them having been eaten by the starving population. The priest noted that people everywhere were suffering from the effects of severe malnutrition (beri-beri, etc.) and that most of the women in the church where he celebrated mass were in mourning. Little medical treatment was available, the army having taken over Dili Hospital for its war-wounded. And the sounds of war were always to be heard. During the day there was the distant sound of heavy guns and rockets, and often at night Fretilin units launched attacks in the vicinity of the capital. For the ordinary citizens the atmosphere was dominated by insecurity, fear and oppression. It was common for Indonesian soldiers to slap or kick any Timorese who failed to stand to attention as they walked by. To the older people it was reminiscent of the behaviour of the occupying Japanese troops during World War 2. Timorese suspected of having links with Fretilin or of opposition to integration were constantly being arrested and taken to the dreaded Bakin interrogation rooms in the Hotel Tropical where they were tortured or beaten up, sometimes with Colonel Sinaga or Major Papilaya observing the proceedings. Months after the initial rampage in the aftermath of the invasion, women were still being raped, and men beaten for trying to prevent these brutalities. Excesses such as these prompted the Bishop to write to Adam Malik and complain bitterly about the behaviour of the Indonesian soldiers. Some officials complained to Dading, now comfortably ensconsed in the house formerly occupied by the Mayor of Dili, to be told, with a shrug, that such things are inevitable in war, or that there was simply nothing that he could do about it.

Disobedience of the orders of the military command brought severe penalties, sometimes for seemingly minor offences. For example, on 17 August 1976, three or four Timorese were shot for having refused to attend the National Day, or *Harian Merdeka*, demonstration. There were penalties for listening to the Fretilin radio and, for a time, to Radio Australia. From time to time Governor Araujo tried to intervene but this merely served to antagonize the ruling army officers, who were later to have him removed from office. Even Lopes da Cruz was shocked at what was happening in newly occupied districts, and on 10 February he told the Indonesian press in Jakarta of excesses by the troops, but was careful to add that these had occurred as revenge for Fretilin's cruelty. Also during that month da Cruz was to declare that more than 50 000 Timorese had died in the war. However, this statement was later 'clarified' in Jakarta, it being asserted that what the Timorese leader meant was that there had been more than 50 000 victims, the figure including those people who had lost their homes and sought refuge in Indonesia. This correction has often been used by Indonesians, and apologists for Indonesia, to illustrate just how inaccurate reporting of the Timor situation was at the time. The writer has been able to interview one of da Cruz's UDT colleagues, who stated that da Cruz had actually used the word 'massacred' and had sought to draw world attention to the killing that was going on in East Timor. But immediately after his statement had been released, Lopes da Cruz had a hurried visit from Colonel Sugiyanto, who insisted that the statement be changed immediately because it was potentially very damaging to Indonesia. Under the Colonel's 'guidance' da Cruz's remarks were modified accordingly, and the correction was subsequently repeated *ad nauseam* by Indonesia's sympathizers in the United States and Australia. Tomas Goncalves, one of the foremost integrationists, was distressed at the wanton killing of Timorese in Aileu, and for a time even he was placed under certain restrictions.

On the eve of the formal act of integration in Jakarta, there was no slackening of fighting or of the harsh treatment meted out to the population at large. In May, according to reports from several sources, about 26 people were executed in Liquica, and further mass killings occurred at Maubara and Basar Tete. But one of the bloodiest incidents occurred at Lamaknan (also known as Lakmaras), in the border area. There Indonesian troops who had been badly mauled by Fretilin units took their vengeance on a large refugee settlement which housed some 5000 to 6000 people in temporary shelters, according to Timorese who had served as truck drivers for the Indonesian force (Timorese drivers were said to be in demand because of their familiarity with the local terrain). The troops set fire to several of the houses, causing the Timorese to protest angrily. According to witnesses, the troops then turned their guns on the refugee community for several hours, shooting down men, women and children. Even Timorese with their hands raised or women on their knees, imploring the troops to stop their senseless killing, were often themselves shot. According to one of the truck drivers, about 2000 people were killed on that day. The incident so appalled him, he said, that he immediately began planning his escape. This bloodbath occurred in June 1976, when the Indonesian government and press were telling the outside world that the Timorese had become impatient with the lack of international support for their desire to integrate with Indonesia, and that the local assembly had voted unanimously in favour of a petition demanding immediate integration!

In 1976 the Indonesians began to form two Timorese battalions — Battalions 744 and 745 — with a few Apodeti volunteers and many conscripts. Timorese were also conscripted into *Hansip* (*Pertahanan*

Sipil, or civil defence) units but there was soon little enthusiasm for such military activities. For one thing, the Indonesians ordered the Timorese to precede them on operational missions against Fretilin. For another, the Timorese soldiers were treated as inferior beings by ordinary Javanese troops. And the senseless and endless killing alienated them. For example, one Timorese had been a member of a support unit during the covert operations against Balibo, Maliana and Atabai, but when he arrived in Dili some days after the invasion he found his mother in mourning because the invading troops had shot his father. His father had been a male nurse with no links with Fretilin supporters. According to this informant, his father had been dressed in his Red Cross uniform when the Indonesians had killed him. He was then to learn that his younger brother had also been shot. This Timorese subsequently managed to leave the army, and to escape to Portugal.

In June and July 1976 when the integration formalities were being settled, conditions in Dili eased somewhat. More food was available and there were signs that the occupying forces were subject to stricter discipline. But even during this period, which was to end later in the year, the looting still continued. From a number of accounts, the Indonesian troops often complained of not being paid, and told the Timorese that they were forced to collect in kind. One macabre practice in the interior was to force labour gangs of Timorese to dig up the graves of Timorese rulers, some of whom had precious objects buried with them. There were also reported cases of bodies being exhumed by collectors of gold teeth. One early target for large-scale ransacking was Dili Hospital. After the invasion, most of the hospital's sophisticated equipment, which had attracted the praise of the International Red Cross doctors, was dismantled and shipped to an unknown destination in Java. Ironically, the hospital was then converted to military purposes, and the local population, at least in the first year or so after the invasion, was forced to rely on a handful of Timorese-trained nurses for most medical treatment.

Meanwhile, the Fretilin forces consolidated their position in the mountains. In many respects life appears to have been easier behind Fretilin lines than it was in the occupied areas, and, according to a priest, Father de Rego, who spent more than three years behind Fretilin lines, the food situation did not become precarious until the Indonesian offensive of 1977. In a number of fertile valleys and on the slopes of mountains farming was intensified, the results providing a modest but adequate diet for the mountain population, inflated as it was by the tens of thousands of refugees from the towns of the north coast and other occupied areas. The political situation was obviously very much easier. The Timorese were united by the common bond of hostility to a brutal invader. Fretilin dealt severely with traitors, but from all reports dissidents were surprisingly few until a serious division developed in the leadership in 1977. Indonesia regularly accused Fretilin of atrocities and terrorism, but from the writer's research there appears to be little foundation to these charges. The main exception was the wanton killing of about 150 UDT and Apodeti prisoners whom Fretilin leaders took to the mountains with them after the invasion. These included Major Maggioli Gouveia, the former chief of police, Vitor Santa, a former senior administration official, and Osorio Soares, an Apodeti leader. The prisoners were taken to Aileu and were killed some weeks after the assault on Dili, reportedly on about 25 December. Although feelings of bitterness and anger were running high in the wake of the slaughter of hundreds of Timorese and Chinese in Dili, intensifying the feeling of bitterness towards the UDT for having set in train the events that led to the invasion, and towards Apodeti for its links with Indonesia, the wanton killing of these prisoners was without any justification. It is not known who ordered the killing. It has been suggested that Alarico Fernandes, who was Minister for Internal Affairs and Security, was the leader responsible, and for this reason he remains an outcast in Dili. Nicolau Lobato himself was probably in a state of bitter anguish, having just learnt that his wife Isobel had been taken out and shot by *Brawijaya* troops. The killing of these prisoners was a brutal, inexcusable act, but an understandable, though unacceptable, consequence of the rapacious behaviour of the Indonesian forces in the first weeks after the invasion. However, it would be less than just to excuse the Fretilin leaders, for their action was a wanton and senseless act of reprisal. It is clear that the Indonesians provoked Fretilin into this senseless killing by their own bloody excesses at the time of the invasion, but such a consideration cannot alter the fact that the Timorese independence movement also committed an atrocity, taking the lives of prisoners, most of whom neither wanted integration nor had had anything to do with the Indonesian move to force East Timor into the Republic.

From the day of the invasion East Timor was effectively isolated but Fretilin succeeded in establishing a radio link with Australia, which was to remain open for more than two years, in spite of some half-hearted attempts by Australian authorities to close down the Darwin end of the link, seemingly in order to appease the Indonesian government. During this time a steady flow of reports on the fighting were passed to Timorese representatives at the United Nations and to interested groups and individuals in Australia, who were thus able to piece together a picture of the armed resistance. Although much of the information contained in these messages was emotive in language and difficult to assess, descriptions of some of the battles and other incidents were corroborated later by accounts from sources in the occupied zones.

From the outset it was apparent that Fretilin's guerrilla-type tactics, its surprise attacks and ambushes, sapped the strength and morale of the Indonesian forces, many of whom appear to have had only a confused understanding of what the war was about. When the Joint Command found the going difficult on the north coast early in 1976, where bad weather added to their difficulties, the Indonesians carried out a landing at beaches on the south coast. These landings were designed partly to prevent the U.N. special envoy from gaining access to Fretilin lines from Darwin, and partly to deter any attempts by Australians to send in arms or relief supplies. On 1 February 1976, U.S. intelligence analysts informed their government that the prospect of a visit to Fretilin by the special envoy, Mr Winspeare Guicciardi, was causing alarm among Indonesian leaders who were determined to block such a venture, even to the extent of sinking the Portuguese frigate he was proposing to use.[15] However, the south coast operation itself soon ran into difficulties. It was carried out in the wet season, in jungle terrain in which armoured vehicles were of little use to the attacking infantry. Near the Quelan River, the Timorese counter-attacked and forced the Indonesians back to the coast where they remained until further reinforcements eventually arrived. Bitter fighting took place in the southern strip between Betano and Fato Berliu on several occasions between January and October 1976.

However, Indonesian forces moving inland from the north coast gradually occupied key centres in the interior, including Ainaro, Maubisse, Ermera and Viqueque. These captures were not always permanent, and important towns like Bobonaro, Ermera and Viqueque were taken for only short periods. Lobato's troops did not have the means to consolidate such gains and the main towns were soon retaken by the Indonesians. In some sectors towns changed hands many times. Indonesian efforts to occupy the Laclubar area, not far from Fretilin headquarters, were repulsed again and again over a period of more than two years. The pattern of the armed resistance began to change after the first six months of fighting. The Timorese leaders soon concluded that it would be suicidal to continue trying to engage in frontal combat the numerically superior and much better equipped Indonesian army units which, thanks to a timely input of military aid from the United States and Europe, steadily increased their firepower. Furthermore, large-scale operations involved logistical and tactical conditions which the Fretilin military commanders were not trained to cope with. The Indonesian forces, whatever their other weaknesses, always held the advantage in such circumstances, their units being able to make extensive use of light armour, artillery, rockets (the ABRI made some use of rocket launchers), air support and, in areas near the coast, naval bombardment. It was clear that, in the more congenial conditions of the dry season, an attempt by Fretilin to engage in frontal warfare would soon erode and weaken the fighting capability of the Falintil troops. Therefore, from the middle of 1976 onwards the pattern of Timorese resistance shifted even further towards guerrilla warfare. In their messages sent via Darwin the Fretilin leaders (the voice on the radio was in fact usually that of Alarico Fernandes) consistently claimed that they controlled more than 80 per cent of the territory. To many of the recipients of these telegrams the claims seemed exaggerated, given the size and firepower of the large Indonesian military force in East Timor, but in May 1977 a group of foreign diplomats reported on their return to Jakarta that the Indonesian military force in East Timor controlled one-third of the area and Fretilin one-third, with the remainder existing as a no-man's land in which Fretilin forces moved freely. Refugees who came out of Timor at about the same time (none of whom had been supporters of Fretilin) insisted that Indonesian control did not extend beyond two or three kilometres outside the limits of the larger towns and villages. It might be supposed, therefore, that the Fretilin forces were able to move freely throughout most of the territory for more than three years after the attack on Dili in December 1975.

For the purposes of military organization Fretilin divided the territory into a number of military sectors, with most of its operations being launched by small units of less than company size. The character and extent of their political organization and control have never been very clear, but during this early period, when the resistance movement had a communications network at its disposal, it was able to hold a number of 'national' conferences, with representatives from most districts coming to a central location. In spite of the fact that Indonesia was able to seal off the area under Fretilin's control from the outside world, it has been possible to sketch a rough picture of conditions there from interviews with people like Father de Rego.[16] This elderly priest was a fairly typical, conservative cleric of the older Portuguese mould. He had not been a supporter of Fretilin: indeed, he had been virtually forced at gun-point by Falintil soldiers to go to the mountains with them. Yet de Rego developed a deep respect for the Timorese resistance movement and in particular for its leader, Nicolau Lobato. He insisted that conditions in the mountains were almost normal until 1977, when food began to become a problem. It did not become serious until the Indonesians began sending 'search-and-destroy' missions well into the central mountain region with the deliberate aim of destroying food crops there. Up to that time, it appears that a relatively intense agricultural programme, conducted by the more skilled farmers among the resistance movement and the villagers, had produced quite impressive results. According to the accounts of other sources who had first-hand knowledge of the situation behind Fretilin lines, the food position in the mountains was much easier than in the towns occupied by Indonesian troops. Admittedly, in the Fretilin areas there were other serious problems, such as no doctors, but, as few of the Timorese under Indonesian rule had access to the doctors sent in by the Indonesians (who, as has already been mentioned, concentrated on the treatment of their own wounded), in matters of health they were probably not disadvantaged. The custodians of the health of the Fretilin troops and the community were the paramedical staff who, under the Portuguese system, had been well trained.

The first phase of Indonesia's attempts to destroy Fretilin was not a particularly difficult one to cope with, from the point of view of the Timorese resistance. Indeed, in May 1976 war conditions were relaxed enough for Fretilin to hold a congress, with representatives coming from all parts of the territory. At this congress, which took place over two days or so, the delegates also had time to enjoy a festival. However, the discussions were obviously of an urgent nature, and, at this meeting, the future strategy of guerrilla warfare was worked out. Fretilin's main tactics were to ambush troop movements and to carry out surprise attacks on Indonesian-occupied towns. The congress decided that political organization should be tightened up, but the conduct of the war was the main priority. Nicolau Lobato's position as the operational leader of the resistance was unchallenged, with Xavier do Amaral's responsibilities being increasingly confined to political matters. Considerable attention was given to the maximizing and rationalizing of food production, in order to meet the basic needs of the swollen mountain population. Although at first there was opposition to Timorese leaving Fretilin-controlled areas largely because it clashed with the independence movement's central propaganda theme — 'the people are with Fretilin' — the Timorese were subsequently not discouraged from moving back to the areas controlled by Indonesia. Indeed, according to Father de Rego, when problems with food supplies began to emerge, Fretilin leaders themselves began to encourage some of the people to move into Indonesian areas.

It seems that because of the Falintil's determined resistance to the invading troops in the first few months Fretilin was able to intimidate the Indonesian units into conducting a very cautious campaign, and to inculcate fear in the minds of the rank and file of the Indonesian ground forces. The morale of the troops was further eroded by serious logistics problems, some of them caused by Fretilin ambushes, but mostly by bad organization and lack of coordination. Troops were often not paid for months, and they were sometimes without food for several days. It was in these circumstances that the Indonesians treated any Timorese they came across very harshly, beating or even killing ordinary hamlet dwellers, and looting whatever possessions they could get their hands on. The Timorese in the interior were, it appears, assumed to be hostile, and were treated accordingly. But there was also evidence that many of the invading troops became demoralized and simply refused to fight. The situation they encountered in the territory was very different from what they had been led to expect. Not only were the Timorese opposed to integration; there had emerged a bitter dislike of Indonesians and things Indonesian. In the first two years of the occupation some Indonesian unit commanders resolved not to engage the Falintil at all. One Indonesian colonel boasted to a Timorese leader, who at that time was still supporting integration, that as soon as he and his men had arrived in the Kodim (military subdistrict) allocated to them, he had established a private truce with the local Fretilin commander and virtually no fighting had taken place between them in that area. 'We haven't lost a soldier', he was reported to have said. The Indonesian will to fight was weakened not only by logistics problems but also by the very high casualty rate, the fact that the Falintil units seldom took prisoners, and the lack of public recognition by the government in Jakarta and the people (from whom the Timor operation was being carefully concealed) that they had been fighting a war for the Republic.

Throughout 1976 and 1977 the Timorese guerrillas kept up a pattern of regular operations against the occupying forces not only in the mountains, but also in the Ermera, Basar Tete and Liquica areas not far from Dili, and near the Indonesian border. From time to time attacks were even launched on units near Dili itself; an indication of the extent of Fretilin's control is that it was able to hold the town of Remexio, only 15 kilometres from the capital, almost without interruption for more than three years. Falintil units also kept up pressure on Indonesian forces at Baucau and Lospalos. The first serious attempt to break the resistance in the interior was undertaken by Indonesian troops in the dry season of 1976, with the support of armoured vehicles, aircraft and helicopters, and with naval bombardment from near Liquica and from the south coast. But this was a very successful year for Fretilin, which was still able to exploit its advantage of great familiarity with the terrain. Moreover, food and arms supplies were adequate, and the success of the guerrilla campaign, during which Falintil losses appear to have been light, kept morale high. Father de Rego commented that, during that year, life in the Turiscai–Laclubar area was almost normal. There were some air attacks, but they were generally inaccurate and few civilian casualties were sustained.

Fretilin messages regularly contained what, at the time, seemed to be exaggerated claims of losses inflicted on Indonesian forces, but later information from Timorese who had accompanied the invading forces confirmed that their losses were indeed high. Claims of more than a hundred Indonesian troops killed were fairly common in Fretilin messages while their own losses were said to have been small. In fact, most of these claims must have been guesswork. As most of the Falintil attacks were of the 'hit-and-run' kind it is unlikely that the Timorese commanders would have been in a position to make an accurate assessment of the extent of the casualties they had succeeded in inflicting on the Indonesian forces. Indonesian casualties were nevertheless heavy: early in 1977 a high-ranking Indonesian officer told a prominent Dutch official that already some 5000 casualties had been inflicted on the invading forces by Fretilin.

At the end of 1976 the first of a series of Catholic Church reports came to Australia, from an Indonesian organization that had become very troubled at what had been happening in the former Portuguese colony. The report, which was mainly about humanitarian relief operations, gave a grim picture of the situation in the territory.[17] Its authors stated that, although they themselves had regarded as an exaggeration the earlier report that 60 000 Timorese had perished since the fighting had begun, Portuguese priests in East Timor had told them that the death toll might already have reached 100 000. The report also provided further evidence that many Timorese had gone to the hills to join Fretilin after the arrival of the Indonesian forces. It mentioned that in Ermera, for example, of the 5000 people who had been there when the ABRI arrived only 1000 were left; the others had fled to the mountains. The report noted that '80% of the territory is not under the direct control of the Indonesian military forces', and referred to the decline in support for integration because of such excesses as 'stealing, robbery, burning houses, violating girls, etc.' by the occupying forces. It noted that the administration of Araujo was 'without any authority', being merely a 'puppet government for the military commander', and that 'if there should be held a real referendum the people will choose Fretilin'. The Indonesian church report also mentioned Fretilin's military tactics. It said that the units of the pro-independence movement avoided frontal attacks or engagements, and were conducting a guerrilla war. It mentioned rumours that the resistance was receiving supplies from Australia. In fact, such rumours could hardly have had any foundation. Perhaps they were based on news reports of the abortive attempt by four Australians from Darwin to take some medical supplies to the south coast of East

Timor, in the hope of getting them to Fretilin. At about the same time there were reports that another small vessel from Australia actually succeeded in reaching Timor, where some medical supplies were handed over to a party of Fretilin troops mounted on Timor ponies, but the author has never been able to establish that this extraordinary venture really took place.

One of the most disturbing parts of the first report from church sources was that Indonesia was about to use napalm 'because they cannot win the war otherwise' and that the indiscriminately destructive Soviet multiple-rocket launcher known as 'Stalin's organ' was already in use. The use of napalm was later confirmed to the writer by a U.S. Defence Department official in Washington, who nevertheless insisted that this explosive was not of American origin, but had been manufactured by the Indonesians themselves. According to this source it was used extensively for a period of about three months. In the dry conditions of the time in East Timor, napalm would have been a devastating weapon against the tinder-dry palapa houses in which most Timorese in the mountains live. These structures would have provided no protection whatever for their occupants.

Until September 1977, in military terms, there does not appear to have been much change in the situation on the ground. But early in that year growing criticism of Indonesia's seizure of the colony in the United States and Western Europe was embarrassing for Jakarta and caused the military command to launch a major offensive designed to crush the resistance. A trickle of disturbing reports from Timor, from the Catholic Church in Indonesia itself, and a report on atrocities committed by Indonesian troops brought the Timor problem to international attention at a time when the leadership of one of the Suharto regime's main international supporters, the United States, was being assumed by Jimmy Carter, a man with a declared commitment to human rights, who promised to make that a central component of U.S. foreign policy. Moreover, in nearby Australia, in spite of the understanding position of the Fraser government and its proclaimed desire 'to put the Timor problem behind us and look to the future', disquiet at Indonesia's act of aggression was being fanned by a steady flow of messages via the Fretilin link with the Northern Territory, not to speak of the disturbing reports from non-Fretilin sources. No doubt, as Jakarta saw it, it was imperative that attempts be made to head off an international campaign against Indonesia, which could, among other things, obstruct the Suharto government's aim to use a sizeable slice of its financial gains from the oil bonanza to re-equip the armed forces with modern weapons from Western Europe and the United States. The need for this re-equipment programme was made more urgent by the poor showing of the army in East Timor. The first step, therefore, was to bring the war to a quick end and suppress opposition to integration.

The Indonesian military offensive which commenced in September 1977 followed a much-publicized offer of amnesty to Fretilin troops and their supporters by President Suharto on Indonesia's national day, 17 August, but, in contrast to the amnesty 'carrot', the armed force 'stick' was intended to be kept secret. The launching of this operation, which involved the injection of another 15 000 troops into the campaign, was, however, leaked to the Australian press, almost certainly from Defence Department sources, and it was also the subject of a number of urgent telegrams from Fretilin. Another account of the intensified military operation came from the pen of a *Paris Match* journalist, Denis Reichle, who at that time managed to smuggle himself into Indonesian Timor, and then over the border into a Fretilin-held area. He later reported that the Indonesian forces had just strengthened their '20 000 strong East Timor army with an extra 10,000 men', and that these troops were, as he put it, 'systematically wiping out' the populations of villages known to be, or suspected of, supporting Fretilin.

Intensified operations by land forces were accompanied by air attacks on Timorese positions and villages in the interior, and, from time to time, by naval bombardment from warships. Bitter fighting raged in many parts of the territory, with heavy loss of life on both sides. As Father de Rego and Denis Reichle reported, among the main targets were Fretilin food supplies and the hundreds of small farms in the mountains which, thanks to the improved farming techniques, had been keeping supplies to the beleaguered Timorese at an adequate level. 'Search-and-destroy' operations pushed into the interior, greatly assisted by the newly acquired 'Broncos' (the American OV-10, an anti-insurgency aircraft), which had been conveniently supplied by U.S. Defence authorities. At about the same time a senior Australian aircraft industry executive confided to the author that the Indonesians were also using the Nomad aircraft, which they had just procured from Australia. The Nomads were apparently fitted out so that they could be adapted to this 'anti-insurgency' role. Fretilin troops still managed to hold their own for almost eighteen months, but their messages no longer exuded confidence. In fact, their contents revealed that the Timorese leaders knew that they were now fighting a desperate life-and-death struggle.

Perhaps the most graphic and poignant description of the tremendous and traumatic upheaval that these military operations created for the Timorese was contained in a letter from a priest in Dili, which was sent in November 1977 to two Dominican nuns in Portugal. 'The war', it read,

> continues with the same fury as it had started. The invaders have intensified their attacks in the three classic ways — from land, sea and air. . . . From last September [1977] the war was again intensified. The bombers did not stop all day. Hundreds of human beings died every day. The bodies of the victims become food for carnivorous birds (if we don't die of the war, we die of the plague), villages have been completely destroyed, some tribes (*sucos*) decimated . . . and the war enters its third year with no promise of an early end in sight. The barbarities (understandable in the Middle Ages, and justifiable in the Stone Age), the cruelties, the pillaging, the unqualified destruction of Timor, the executions without reason, in a word all the 'organized' evil, have spread deep roots in Timor. There is complete insecurity and the terror of arbitrary imprisonment is our daily bread (I am on the 'persona non grata' list and any day I could disappear). Fretilin soldiers who give themselves up are disposed of — for them there is no prison. Genocide will come soon, perhaps by next December. Taking advantage of the courage of the Timorese they are being recruited to fight their brothers in the jungle [or interior]. It is they who march in front of the [Indonesian] battalions to intimidate the targets.[18]

The priest's letter also provided a grim picture of other aspects of life in Timor at that time. The political situation, he said, was 'indescribable'.

> Sabotage and lies dominate the information sector. Integration is not the expression of the will of the people. The people are controlled by the Indonesians and given the character of the oppressor and the level of the Indonesian presence, it is a lamb being led to the slaughter. In the presence of such force there is no resistance; liberty is a word without meaning. The proclaimed liberation is synonomous [*sic*] with slavery.

The author ended his letter with a forlorn and desperate plea: 'Please do something positive for the liberty of the Timorese people. The world ignores us and our grief . . . we are on the road to complete genocide.' And he concluded with words sounding strangely like an absolution: 'We ask all justice-loving people to save Timor and we ask God to forgive the sins of the Timorese people.'

Another bleak glimpse of the suffering, oppression and destruction of that time was contained in a letter sent from Timor a couple of months later:

> An ever-increasing violent war rages in Timor. The group of villages in which I lived has been completely destroyed. There is not one soul there. . . . One sees no one else but Indonesian soldiers and Chinese on the streets of Dili; there are very few Timorese for the majority is either in the forest, dead or in jail. The luck of Timor is to be born in tears, to live in tears, and to die in tears.'[19]

But this operation did not at first seriously weaken Fretilin. Its main casualties were the civilian population who were forced into a hopeless choice: to stay in the mountains and starve, or surrender to the Indonesian forces and be herded into concentration centres, euphemistically called 'resettlement centres', where their chances of dying of starvation or disease were, it often turned out, just as great. President Suharto's amnesty in reality proved to be anything but the gracious act of pardon Indonesian propaganda tried to portray it to be. The Timorese, who had in the first instance fled from the brutalities and rapaciousness of the invaders (and were not, as Jakarta tried to present it, forcibly taken to the mountains by Fretilin), after 1977 were encouraged by the Falintil to present themselves to the Indonesians because of the increasingly difficult food situation in the interior. For many of them the welcome they received was far from an act of grace and mercy. An unknown number of those with Fretilin leanings were shot or tortured, especially in sectors where the ABRI had been mauled by Fretilin, while the others were forced, sometimes at gun-point, into the centres, which were a crude version of the strategic hamlets set up by the Americans in Vietnam. For many of the Timorese in these resettlement centres famine conditions, disease and a slow death lay ahead. This was partly because few of the military had any humanitarian interest in the welfare of their sullen and miserable charges, and partly because of the appalling incapacity of the Indonesian administration to provide even a modest regular supply of food and medicines to the centres. Some of these centres were in any case in remote parts of the province, where supply lines were vulnerable to ambushes and in the wet season were at times inaccessible other than by helicopter.

However, for most of the Timorese by 1978 there was no real alternative but to try their luck with the amnesty, and thousands reluctantly 'reported themselves' to the units of the ABRI. In the wet season of 1977–78 this movement from the mountains took some of the pressure off Fretilin forces; in fact, for reasons that are not clear there appears to have been a lull in the fighting. In May 1978, at the beginning of the dry season, yet another operation, codenamed 'Skylight', was launched by the Indonesian military command, now under the direct, determined and energetic leadership of General Yusuf, the newly appointed Minister for Defence. Yusuf, a South Sulawesian, had once briefly served under the notorious rebel leader Kahar Muzakkar, before the latter turned against Sukarno and led a rebellion in South Sulawesi which was to continue for more than a decade, before finally being crushed by a force led by his former second-in-command, Andi Mohammad Yusuf, in the early 1960s. The long-term aim of 'Skylight' was to round up the Fretilin leaders, but its immediate objective was to destroy the Timorese offensive capability and to establish an effective measure of security before the visit of President Suharto to East Timor in July that year. From a reading of Fretilin messages sent to the writer via Darwin, and from sources in Jakarta, it is clear that this particular offensive led to a steady weakening of Fretilin's military position over the next six months. But it was not until later in the year that units of the Timorese resistance were finally forced out of positions quite near Dili, such as Remexio and Railaco. However, all things considered, 1978 was a bad year for Fretilin and its military strength was steadily whittled away. In the face of the continuing isolation of the forces of DRET, the starvation and disease caused by the war and, to a lesser extent, by Indonesian air attacks on villages and the food-producing mountain valleys, the morale of the resistance appears to have weakened.

As pressures on the resistance built up, it was no surprise to learn in 1977 that serious divisions were beginning to appear within the leadership of Fretilin. However, when the final break occurred it must have had a demoralizing effect on the resistance army. In September Xavier do Amaral was deposed as president, charged with treason and placed in custody. He was accused of plotting to seize full power, of creating division between the military and civilian components of the leadership, of not having given sufficient attention to the war, of having behaved like a feudal lord, and of having planned secret negotiations with the Indonesians. A purge appears subsequently to have taken place, with a number of Xavier's collaborators being expelled from the Central Committee. The presidency was taken over by Nicolau Lobato who, in any case, had long been Fretilin's main leader. The precise nature of the conflict has never been made clear. Father de Rego knew about it but not in great detail. It seems that, as the war progressed, Xavier's position weakened, with Nicolau emerging as the dominant figure in political matters, as well as the overall military commander and leading strategist. But, from a knowledge of the personalities of the two leaders it is possible to conclude that the real differences had little to do with Xavier's desire to challenge Nicolau's pre-eminent position. One major difference between the two was already well in evidence before the invasion — Xavier's interest in exploring the possibility of a negotiated settlement, and Lobato's determination and emphasis on self-reliance. It was not surprising, therefore, to learn that Xavier had become increasingly pessimistic about Fretilin's prospects of winning in the end, in the face of what must have seemed diminishing hopes for the kind of international intervention that might have brought a chance of victory to East Timor's struggle. Whatever hopes had lingered about a change of heart in Canberra would have been finally dashed when Australia virtually abandoned any further interest in East Timor's right to self-determination in January 1978, when the territory was recognized as a *de facto* part of Indonesia. The new Carter administration had declined to take up the cause after the President took office in January 1977. Further, Fretilin's main supporters, several African states, China and international and human rights groups, had simply not been able to break down East Timor's isolation. No supplies were getting to Fretilin, and none of its leaders was able to get to the outside world to give an account of the real situation in the territory. To some of them, therefore, the struggle must have appeared futile and their cause hopeless. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that Xavier and some of his Central Committee colleagues should have begun to explore the possibility of negotiating some kind of deal with the Indonesians. Also, some of the Timorese leaders began to wonder whether the war was worth the heavy loss of life that had already been inflicted on their people, and which was bound to reach colossal proportions as Indonesia intensified its attacks on the Fretilin-held areas. Whatever the circumstances, it seems unlikely that Xavier had become a convert to *integrasi*. Had this been so, he would have been used extensively by his Indonesian captors after his subsequent surrender to them. Yet this has not been the case. Indeed, the Indonesians eventually removed him from Dili to Bali, where he was last seen in 1980 at the house of the Kodam *Panglima*, Brigadier-General Dading Kalbuadi, with little more than servant status.

The second fracture within the Fretilin leadership manifested itself a little more than a year later when Alarico Fernandes, the Minister for Information and Internal Security, announced over the Fretilin radio that he and some of his comrades had broken away from the Central Committee. Fernandes, whose mother was in Sydney, was well known as the voice at the other end of the radio link with Darwin. It was claimed by some Fretilin leaders abroad that he had sold out to the Indonesians. This may be true but the circumstances under which he was captured by, or defected to, the occupying forces are still far from clear. According to sources within Indonesia he became separated from the main body of Fretilin and was captured not far from Dili. With Alarico Fernandes' capture, Fretilin's radio link with the outside world was severed, and the guerrilla movement has been virtually cut off ever since, not only from its international supporters, but also from the DRET leaders abroad — Jose Ramos Horta, Mari Alkatiri and Rogerio Lobato. But a far more serious blow was to be delivered to the resistance a couple of months later.

The year 1978 was a time of sharp decline in the fortunes of Fretilin. No longer were the mountain retreats secure havens. As Father de Rego has graphically described it, a large section of the population within Fretilin's lines was constantly on the move, fleeing Indonesian 'search-and-destroy' operations or air attacks. Towards the end of 1978 communications began to break down between the guerrilla units. But the worst disaster struck on 31 December when Indonesian forces in a special operation located the bivouac of the Timorese president, Nicolau Lobato, who was killed in the ensuing engagement. According to press reports from Jakarta about 20 Fretilin leaders and troops were killed with him and another 12 or so captured. The attack was the culmination of an operation which had commenced more than a fortnight earlier, and involved the use of 2500 troops who had been whisked from place to place by helicopters. Apparently, the Timorese leader fought to the end with the same determination and courage that had enabled him to direct one of the most successful guerrilla campaigns of its kind for more than three years. The Indonesians claimed that he was shot by a Timorese sergeant, but the name given in the press report was not characteristically Timorese, suggesting that his killer may not have come from East Timor at all; perhaps the nationality of the killer was falsified in order to prevent him from becoming a target for a retaliation.

Although for more than a year the Indonesians had been claiming that Fretilin was finished and that all that remained were 'some roving bands', the killing of Lobato was heralded in Jakarta as a great victory, accompanied by much rejoicing. General Yusuf himself at once flew to Dili to inspect the body of the fallen Timorese leader, which was photographed against the background of a group of triumphant Indonesian officers, including Brigadier-General Dading Kalbuadi. According to Timorese who were in Dili at the time, the local reaction was anything but one of rejoicing. A wave of deep sorrow and hopelessness swept across the territory. Even high-ranking Timorese in the Indonesian administration were visibly affected by the news of Lobato's death. In the previous three years Nicolau Lobato had become a legendary figure to both Timorese and Indonesians, but to the former he was a symbol of the slender hope that some day the occupying forces would be driven out of East Timor. He and his Falintil soldiers had seemed indestructible, having survived hundreds of air raids, naval bombardments, and the assaults of tens of thousands of Indonesian troops, with their rockets and armoured support. Lobato had become a folk hero, and the symbol of resistance, to most Timorese, including those whose political loyalties in 1975 had been to UDT or Apodeti. For the first time many Timorese felt that theirs was a defeated nation.

After the loss of the radio link with Darwin and Lobato's death, the activities of the armed resistance became very difficult to follow. It was reported that Carvarinho (also known as Mau Lear), the vice-president, took over from Nicolau but he too was said to have been killed on 2 February. In the first few months of 1979 it appears that the Fretilin remnants were in rather poor shape. There were more captures and killings, and groups of demoralized Fretilin troops were reported to have surrendered. However, as at least several hundred of these were shot after they had been taken into captivity, most of the remainder chose to fight on in the mountains, with the guerrilla campaign shifting towards the eastern part of the island. Some time during 1979, probably towards the end of the year, when the wet season set in, the remaining units of the armed resistance regrouped and resumed their attacks, usually in the form of ambushes. Refugees who left the territory for Portugal or Australia at the end of 1979 and early in 1980 reported guerrilla activity in the Ermera-Liquica-Aileu-Dili area, with the major operations in the eastern sector. Another source of information was letters smuggled out of the province — smuggled in an attempt to evade the strict censorship imposed on all mail from East Timor by the Indonesian military authorities in Dili. One such letter, dated 26 March 1980, which was sent to a relative in a refugee camp near Lisbon stated:

> The armed struggle continues to be intense, particularly in the eastern part of the island . . . despite the capture of thousands of rebel weapons, G3's and Mausers, in the monsoon season of 1979. . . . I don't know how it's possible for them to do it, but those in the bush are giving strong resistance to tens [*sic*] of Indonesian battalions which are fighting and pursuing them. The Indonesians are taking casualties. Helicopters arrive daily at Dili Hospital carrying soldiers wounded on various fronts.[20]

This particular letter also referred to Timorese conscripts in Indonesian battalions deserting with their rifles and joining their compatriots in the mountains. Several refugees who were interviewed by the writer in Lisbon in October 1980 also talked about these desertions. For example, there were several accounts of more than a hundred Timorese deserting from both regular units (744 and 745 Battalions) and from *Hansip* (civil defence) establishments. Another letter, also written in March 1980, stated that 'the war continues to be hot along guerrilla lines, strongest in the eastern area round Lospalos'.[21] According to this source, discontent had caused no less than 500 Timorese to desert. They were said to include 'civil servants and well-respected people, including second line troops of *Hansip*, who carried their weapons with them'. This injection of fresh recruits evidently boosted the capability of Fretilin, and in 1980 it launched two daring attacks, one in January, not far from Dili, and an even more daring assault on the capital on 10 June, in which a number of Indonesian troops were killed, provoking the occupying authorities to carry out reprisals. Four Timorese, whose loyalties were probably under suspicion, were subsequently taken to a location south of the capital and summarily executed, in spite of the protests of Timorese church and government officials. Their bodies were reportedly left there for some time, apparently as a warning to the citizens of the capital.

Did the gloating Indonesian generals who gathered triumphantly around the corpse of Nicolau Lobato early in 1979 believe that the guerrilla war was over? If they did, they were to be proved wrong. More than two and a half years later, yet another operation, this time designated *Operasi Keamanan*, was launched, again with the aim of finally overpowering Fretilin and 'restoring security', a condition which had not existed since East Timor had been invaded by the ABRI forces. Clearly Fretilin adapted itself yet again to a changed set of circumstances. Based on refugee accounts, it appears probable that after 1979 the guerrilla movement fragmented into small groups whose operations proved to be even more difficult for the Indonesian forces to detect. Despite a series of mopping-up operations by the Indonesian army, the Fretilin resistance has proved to be very difficult to stamp out. Under the leadership Jose Alexandro Gusmao, a force of up to 1000 continued, as late as March 1983, to harrass Indonesian forces in several parts of the province.

The mass movement of refugees in 1979 would also have hampered the security forces in their attempt to isolate the components of Fretilin after Nicolau Lobato's death. But the brutal treatment of those members of the resistance who surrendered provided the independence movement with a good reason for fighting on. Some were shot shortly after capture, more than 100 members of Fretilin, with their families, being disposed of in this way at Quelicai in the central eastern sector. Others were tortured, and a handful of captive Fretilin leaders were reported to have been hurled to their deaths from a helicopter somewhere between Dili and Aileu. According to information from Timor late in 1980 a number of captured Fretilin supporters were for more than a month allowed to move freely around Dili, then were again taken into custody and are believed to have been executed. In 1981 several hundred Timorese who surrendered to the troops of *Operasi Keamanan* were reported to have been killed. Thousands of former members of the independence movement, or their relatives, were imprisoned or exiled to the offshore island of Atauro, and to certain other Indonesian islands to the north, among them Alor and Wetar. Yet another group of Timorese have been incarcerated in prisons in East Timor itself — two or three are known to exist in Dili, one in Baucau, and several others elsewhere on the island. The harsh treatment of those who surrendered, or were captured, did nothing to lessen the hostility of the local population towards their Indonesian masters. Over the years many of those who originally collaborated with the Indonesians, or supported the idea of integration, have turned against the occupying forces, for reasons which have already been mentioned. The arrogant and rapacious behaviour of the troops converted even some former Apodeti supporters into secret admirers of Fretilin, in whose ranks some of them had relatives.

The consolidation of Indonesian rule

Very little is known about the political organization and character of post-1978 Fretilin, but there are indications that it was gradually transformed into a very different body from the movement which proclaimed the Democratic Republic of East Timor in 1975. Although some Fretilin ministers and supporters abroad contend that its basic character had not changed, they evidently knew very little about the resistance movement as it was after 1979, because they have had little contact with the guerrillas since Alarico Fernandes surrendered to the Indonesians in 1978. Indeed, until recently the Fretilin ministers-in-exile were not sure of the identity of the leaders. Former UDT leaders claim, on the other hand, that Fretilin had become a nationalist movement in which their own followers were equally influential. This, too, is difficult to prove. In reality, the guerrillas probably have neither the time nor the opportunity for much ideological discussion. Their main aim is, most likely, to survive and strike at their enemy whenever the opportunity arises. There is the impression, however, that the resistance became the violent expression of the attitudes of hatred, frustration and discontent harboured by the majority of Timorese, whatever might have been their political inclinations in the past. While the guerrilla war continues there is a flicker of hope that the *malai*, the foreigner, will eventually be forced to go away and leave the Timorese to work out their own future. It could be that Fretilin has gradually become the violent expression of a commonly held hostility to the oppressor, and of the assumption that all will be irretrievably lost if the spark of armed resistance is ever completely extinguished.

The year 1978 was not only a bad year for Fretilin; it was a grim year for the population at large, as reports from aid workers, who were given access to parts of the province in 1979, were to reveal. The first frank report on the humanitarian situation at the time came from an Indonesian church organization, whose representatives had just returned to Jakarta after having spent several weeks in the '27th Province'. It was the first report to provide an assessment of the demographic consequences of the seizure of East Timor, and it at once became the subject of both concern and controversy. Referring to the fact that a population of 688 771 had been recorded by the diocese in 1974, it quoted a current estimate supplied by the assistant, Hankam (Defence and Security), which indicated that the population may have declined to 329 271 in the intervening five years, suggesting a catastrophic loss of life since the invasion. It was insisted at the time that the Indonesians were effectively in full administrative control of the territory, and therefore it seemed plausible that the authorities had been in a position to compile a reasonably accurate estimate of the population. Indeed, according to a statement made by General Yusuf himself on 2 January 1979, during a talk with Indonesian journalists a few days after the killing of Nicolau Lobato, there was no 'rebel strength' left in East Timor. If this had been true, the task of assessing the population in the territory would not have been a particularly difficult one. In the event, the figures were immediately disputed, with Indonesian military sources contending that there were still many Timorese 'in the mountains', who were unaccounted for.

The number of casualties from the war, that is, those killed in the conflict, as opposed to the deaths from related causes such as starvation and disease or illnesses which in normal circumstances would have been overcome by medical treatment, has been the subject of continuing controversy. The debate has produced something of a statistical tug of war, with official Indonesian sources, and apologists for Indonesia's seizure of the colony, arguing that only between 15 000 and 50 000 people died as a result of the war, many of whom were described as having been 'victims of the Fretilin terror'. At the other extreme, some Fretilin supporters have declared that about half of East Timor's population were wiped out by the Indonesian invading forces. Clearly one extreme has sought to minimize the loss of life in order to diminish the magnitude of the tragedy (and of the Timor affair as a problem in Australia–Indonesia relations), while the other may have contrived to magnify the humanitarian consequences of Indonesia's invasion in order to attract more international attention to the plight of the Timorese. The task of assessing these contending claims or assessments is a difficult one in the present circumstances. It is possible, however, to determine with reasonable accuracy what the population of East Timor was in 1975, on the eve of the civil war, and to assess the number of people killed in the civil war between Fretilin and UDT, which cost between 1500 and 2000 lives. From there on, however, a major problem in research is the credibility of the accounts from Indonesian official sources which, themselves, have not always been consistent. The problem is further complicated by the fact that, in the present circumstances, only the Indonesian authorities are in a position to carry out a population count. Indeed, it is claimed that such a count was conducted in 1980 for the national census. According to this assessment the population of East Timor in that year stood at just over 550 000, representing a decline of at least 130 000 from what it was on the eve of Indonesia's invasion — if one takes as a base a mid-point between the figures compiled by the Portuguese colonial administration and those maintained by the Church. In the mid-1970s East Timor's population was growing at a rate of between 1.8 and 2.1 per cent per annum and, therefore, had conditions been normal, by 1980 about 750 000 people would have been living in the territory, or 200 000 more Timorese than there were in that year, according to the Indonesian census collection. But, of course, such a calculation is much too simplistic. The growth rate would no doubt have diminished in the war conditions at that time, though the inevitable increase in infant mortality and a higher than normal death rate among the elderly might fairly be blamed on the Indonesian invaders, who were responsible for the desperate conditions created by the fighting. The Timorese as a nation were denied, it might be argued, the expectation that their population would increase naturally to about 750 000 by 1980. Thus, although not all of the loss was incurred by deaths related to the war, it nevertheless constitutes a decline resulting directly or indirectly from Indonesia's military intervention.

The exodus of Timorese, especially in the second half of 1975, has sometimes been portrayed as a major factor in the population decline. It has been claimed that 40 000 to 50 000 Timorese fled into Indonesian Timor during the civil war, and that many of them did not return to the eastern part of the island. According to refugee accounts only some 20 000 Timorese moved into West Timor and most of them have long since returned to their homelands in East Timor, with strong encouragement from the West Timorese whose lands are both poor and heavily populated. In a recent article the Australian journalist Peter Hastings reported that some 10 000 Timorese had fled to nearby Indonesian islands, and another 10 000 had managed to get to Australia or Portugal.[22] The suggestion by Hastings that 10 000 Timorese had fled to other Indonesian islands borders on the preposterous. When the invasion was launched there were no boats available for such escapes. But if they had been available the Timorese would have headed for Australia, and not for the lands of the invader. As for the exodus to Australia and Portugal, only about 4000 Timorese and Chinese have managed to get to these countries in the eight years since August 1975.

Indonesian officials and apologists for their actions in Timor have often suggested that a large proportion of the loss of life occurred in the civil war. As has already been noted, the death toll of the civil war was between 1500 and 2000; the needs of the wounded and other victims of that brief campaign were quickly and effectively dealt with by the ICRC and other aid teams, who were in the province in some strength between August and December 1975. The fighting between UDT and Fretilin would therefore have had little effect on the pattern of population growth. Indeed, if one adds to the death toll the exodus to Darwin in August 1975, the total figure amounts to less than one half of the normal growth for that year!

Any attempt to assess what the real population was at the end of 1982 is fraught with difficulties. There are understandable doubts about the credibilty of the Indonesian census figures. Two Timorese who left the province in 1980 (one of whom had worked in the administration) told the author that the census for East Timor had been deliberately inflated. Also, one senior Indonesian official who had visited the territory several times since the invasion privately expressed the view in 1980 that 'only about 400 000 people' were then in East Timor. It is impossible to judge such assessments, but the question remains: would the Indonesian authorities permit the publication of a low figure, in view of the obvious risk of exposing the government to further international criticism, and more harassment in the United Nations? Such a revelation would have fuelled the opposition to *integrasi* in countries like the United States, the Netherlands, Portugal and Australia, who continue to monitor the situation in East Timor. It is also possible that the population of the province had been inflated by including Indonesians stationed there, including the troops, in the count. It is perhaps questionable that the Indonesians would have considered it necessary to resort to such a deception. However, it is really unnecessary to dwell on the credulity of the census figures. If we accept them as they are we can still get some idea of the colossal humanitarian consequences of Jakarta's annexation of Portugal's former colony, and the crushing of the resistance to integration.

In spite of appeals from the International Red Cross and from organizations like the Australian Council for Overseas Aid, it was not until the second half of 1979, almost four years after the invasion, that the ICRC and the American Catholic Relief Services (CRS) were allowed to establish a limited presence in the territory. In 1976 and 1977 Indonesian authorities claimed that their own Red Cross was capable of handling any humanitarian problems in their new province. They rejected requests by the ICRC to be allowed to resume its activities in the territory after the invasion, at times insinuating that it was not acceptable because ICRC officials had supported Fretilin in 1975. It was alleged on at least one occasion that Red Cross workers had smuggled arms and other supplies to the resistance. Such accusations were utterly groundless. The ICRC mission had behaved with exemplary detachment and impartiality in the Fretilin-administered territory, and in any case it is unlikely that the Indonesian military authorities really believed such a charge, if in fact they did not concoct it. The accusation was probably nothing more than a device designed to keep foreign observers out of East Timor while opposition to independence was being eliminated, and while it was clear that Jakarta's claims to be in full control of the territory were so patently false. It was not until some time after President Carter came to power that the United States began to put private diplomatic pressure on the Indonesians to allow some international aid workers to set up a relief mission in the territory. Then the Indonesians became anxious to head off Congressional interest in the Timor question. The agreement to re-admit the ICRC and CRS missions was largely brought about by a quiet U.S. warning to the Suharto administration that, unless some concession was made on humanitarian grounds, public antipathy towards Indonesia in the United States might lead to Congressional obstruction of the military aid and sales programme.

Before Indonesia embarked on its military operations in 1978 general living conditions appear to have been worse in the 'occupied areas', as Fretilin called them, than in the areas behind Fretilin lines. And it was not just a matter of the oppressive behaviour of the occupying forces. It seems that food production declined sharply and very little food was sent into the province, other than to meet the needs of the Indonesian troops. Even the food supplies for the troops were at times in a parlous state. According to Fretilin sources and information from refugees, in 1976 and 1977 the ABRI's food position was so bad in the mountain areas that the soldiers were constantly looting crops, stealing cattle and buffalo, ransacking Timorese houses in search of food, and even searching for edible native plants. In these circumstances the lot of the ordinary Timorese within occupied lines was at times desperate. It was in the mountains that the best farming areas were located, where some intensive and innovative agricultural methods had enabled the Fretilin leaders to keep the food situation more or less under control. The food-producing areas under Indonesian control suffered not only because harsh occupation policies had demoralized or decimated the population, but also because the best farming lands were subject to guerrilla attacks. The confiscation of food crops by the Indonesian forces antagonized and discouraged the farmers, many of whom took their skills and whatever belongings had not been looted to the hills where they probably added to the effectiveness of the resistance's agricultural labour force. The flight of population from Baucau and Ermera offers good examples of this shift of population from crop-growing areas. In other places, such as the valley of the Gleno River, the Timorese reportedly preferred to give their surpluses to Fretilin rather than have them confiscated by the ABRI.

It would appear, therefore, that, had the Indonesians granted foreign aid workers free access to the territory in the first two or three years after the invasion, it would have created considerable embarrassment for the Suharto regime. It would have meant exposing the extent of armed resistance, and the lie that Fretilin amounted to only a few hundred marauding 'terrorists' in the hills. Moreover, aid workers would have been greeted by a sullen, demoralized people, most of them implacably hostile to those who had forced *integrasi* upon them, whose troops had raped and looted, and finally had plunged the lifestyles of the urban communities into a level of squalor and deprivation reminiscent of conditions during the Japanese occupation in World War 2. The lies and distortions behind Indonesian propaganda and official statements would have been exposed not only to the outside world, but also to the people of Indonesia itself, and, with an election for the presidency coming up in 1978, such a risk was entirely out of the question.

Already the war in East Timor had caused some public disquiet in Indonesia. In spite of heavy censorship, information about the casualties inevitably led to rumour and speculation. Furthermore, as General Murdani candidly admitted to one Western European official, because of the unpopularity of the campaign most units were rotated quickly, spending only two to four months in East Timor. This quick turnover of troops meant that it became increasingly difficult to prevent information about the Timor war from leaking to the public. It was not that the ordinary Indonesians were opposed to the idea of integration. It all made sense, at least in the terms in which the proposition had been presented to them. They were, of course, told that integration with Indonesia was the wish of the vast majority of the people of East Timor, and that the pro-independence forces were largely communists, who planned to invite China or Vietnam to set up a base in the territory. What inevitably did cause discontent was the fact that thousands of Indonesian soldiers had been killed or wounded without, seemingly, any formal official or public recognition of their sacrifices. Then there was the question of compensation, and the need to obtain funds for this purpose was one of the excuses given to the writer for the military's confiscation of the coffee-trading companies and other businesses in East Timor. Initially, some of the profits of companies such as P. T. Denok were said to have been earmarked for compensation payments to the families of Indonesian soldiers killed in Timor.

One of the aims of the operations launched by Indonesian forces in September 1977 and May 1978 was to create better security conditions in the province, so that it might be discreetly opened up to foreign inspection on a selective basis, and thus stem the small but steady flow of criticism from Australia, the United States and certain countries in Western Europe (in particular, Sweden and the Netherlands). In 1976 and 1977 there was a trickle of foreign visitors to the island, but although these visits rarely caused any embarrassment to the Indonesian authorities they did not satisfy international pressures for free access to the territory. The visits were of very short duration, and, as has already been discussed, the programmes were carefully planned and the receptions neatly orchestrated. Usually special security operations were carried out in order to keep resistance activities well away from the towns being visited, thus creating the impression that resistance was minimal, and that the Indonesian forces were well in control of the situation on the ground. However, it is not entirely clear why, in 1976 and 1977, when they appeared to have sufficient strength to do so, the Fretilin guerrillas did not launch attacks during visits by foreign delegations. One probable reason was the Timorese leaders' policy of avoiding frontal assaults, which they would have had to engage in on such occasions, in order to make their presence felt, and such actions would probably have been costly in men and equipment. Another possibility is that the Timorese may have concluded that, as most of the visitors were sympathetic to Indonesia's position in Timor, such an exercise would have been pointless, as well as costly. For special visits, such as the visit of foreign diplomats and press representatives just before the formalizing of *integrasi*, the visit of the congressional representatives William Goodling and Helen Meyner, and President Suharto's brief tour of the province in 1978, security measures were so tight that any challenge by Fretilin would have been very difficult to sustain. On these occasions the Indonesian forces were deployed some kilometres from the towns concerned, preventing the guerrillas from getting close enough to make any impact.

Indeed, most of these visits were so skilfully organized that the visitors appear to have concluded that the security situation was less serious than they had hitherto been led to believe. As has already been pointed out, the Timorese were coached on how to participate in welcoming demonstrations, their cooperation being assured by the presence in their midst of significant numbers of Indonesian troops in civilian clothing. Numerous other special effects were implemented. For example, on the day before Mrs Meyner's visit to Dili Indonesian troops and officials moved large amounts of Red Cross clothing, bedding and furniture into a women's refugee establishment which she was to inspect. According to one of the refugees, who was subsequently interviewed by the author, Indonesian officials moved in and reclaimed all of these comforts shortly after the visit was over. Another Timorese, who had worked with the Indonesian military since the invasion, described how ABRI aircraft had shot up Fretilin positions and suspected pro-Fretilin villages before an aerial inspection by two Australian diplomats in May 1977.

A leading Timorese politician, who spent some four years in East

Timor under Indonesian rule before leaving for Portugal, later said that a fortnight or so before any major visit Indonesian intelligence officers prepared the speeches to be delivered to the visitors by the Governor and other officials. Selected groups of Timorese were also instructed by intelligence officers on how to answer any questions the visitors might put to them. According to this source, who himself had been involved in such preparations, graphs and maps, sometimes with false information on Indonesian expenditures and on the population, were also prepared by these officials. Over the years the occupation authorities evidently became quite expert at such disinformation arrangements, aided no doubt by the ignorance of most visitors about Timor or their declared sympathy for Jakarta's position.

Even the visit of a group of ambassadors from Jakarta to the province at the end of 1978 was not exactly unstructured. At Remexio these diplomats were shocked at the physical condition of the refugees, yet their later public comments suggested that they were taken in by the explanation provided by their Indonesian hosts. Some of the visitors thus guilelessly repeated the story that the Timorese had been forced to go to the hills by Fretilin, and had been held there against their will, while for some time the opposite had been true. Others seemed to accept the explanation that the poor physical condition of the Timorese merely reflected their cultural backwardness and the centuries of Portuguese colonial neglect. This was of course patently untrue. Such famine conditions had not existed since the Japanese occupation.

It is clear that, with a few exceptions, the Indonesians had little to fear from such visits. The visitors were either chosen because of their record of support for Indonesia's Timor policy, or they were officials or diplomats from those countries that 'understood' Indonesia's position in East Timor. As one prominent Timorese later told the writer, these visitors were seldom interested in probing beneath the surface, even when dubious or transparently false accounts were given them by the Indonesians. According to a former Timorese guide, these official visitors were often reluctant to follow up suggestions surreptitiously passed to them by Timorese officials on how they might probe behind the orderly facade their Indonesian hosts had arranged for them. Of course, one problem was that hardly any of these visitors were familiar with what Timor was like under Portuguese colonial rule. Therefore there was a tendency to accept as fact most of what their hosts told them. For example, the Foreign Minister of Papua New Guinea, who made a brief visit to East Timor, later told journalists that he had been taken to the 'White Sands' (Aria Branca) beach near Dili where, he said, during Portuguese rule, only whites had been allowed to bathe. This, as we have seen, was sheer nonsense. More than twenty years before *integrasi*, when Portuguese colonial rule had been authoritarian, even ordinary Timorese frequently used this beach. If there was any discrimination, it was on the grounds of 'civilized' status, a demarcation not unknown in Indonesia itself. Whatever their shortcomings in other areas, the record of the Portuguese in race relations was probably the best of the colonial powers.

Although reports from church sources in East Timor in 1976 and 1977 indicated the need for an emergency humanitarian relief programme, for the reasons already mentioned it was not until well into 1979 that foreign organizations were able to gain limited access to the territory. Before that time aid from foreign countries designated for use in Timor was handed over to the Indonesian authorities, who undertook to channel it through the Indonesian Red Cross, but it is far from clear just how much of this assistance ever got to the people for whom it was intended. In June 1977, the Australian Minister for Administrative Services, in a written reply to a question from Senator Bishop, stated that Australian diplomats who had just visited the province had 'gained the impression that humanitarian assistance was getting through to the people' (letter of 1 June 1977). However, according to information from an official who was involved in the organization of this visit the evidence of foreign assistance was set up specially for the occasion. It was persistently reported by church sources within Indonesia that a great deal of foreign aid was being lost through pilfering by the military and through corruption. One of the problems was that the Indonesian Red Cross (the *Palang Merah Indonesia*), which is an army-dominated organization, declined to report on the distribution of goods earmarked for Timor. According to refugee and church sources, although a lot of this assistance reached Timor, a significant amount of it was intercepted by the army and sold through Chinese shops at prices the ordinary Timorese could not afford. For example, in 1979 a visiting church official noted that bags of maize and rice, humanitarian assistance marked for 'free distribution', were being sold to the population at high prices. In the same year an Indonesian priest noted that although there were medicines for sale in Chinese shops in a certain village the health centre responsible for several thousand Timorese had managed to obtain only 300 Chloroquine tablets and five metres of bandages. He also reported that food aid was being sold to the people — rice at Rp. 25 000 a sack, which was rather higher than the going rate in Dili. On the other hand, a modest but effective aid programme was being channelled through the church in East Timor from Australian, U.S. and Western European church organizations. This channel was not, however, encouraged by the military authorities who made it clear that they wanted the Indonesian military, and not the church, to be identified in Timorese minds as the main providers of relief and charity. Thus, a consignment by World Vision Australia of 10 tonnes of high-protein biscuit and 20 tonnes of vitamin A-enriched milk was shipped to Dili for distribution by the Indonesian Red Cross only after considerable obstacles had been placed in its path. When consent was finally given, no officers of World Vision were allowed to accompany the supplies in order to observe their distribution. Furthermore, despite repeated requests by officials of that organization, no report on how these relief supplies were actually handled was ever obtained from the Indonesian Red Cross. In an assessment of the position the Australian Council for Overseas Aid made the following points:

> All aid has gone to areas under Indonesian control only. Indonesia is very reluctant to admit foreigners. When they have been, their visit has been brief and restricted. All the aid has been sought and given for emergency relief not for production and reconstruction.
>
> . . . no thorough independent assessment of the needs, no supervision of distribution, no implementation of an autonomous programme, and no evaluation of the Indonesian Government's aid programme, have taken place.
>
> All the grants have been made to the Indonesian Red Cross for its programme.[23]

In Timor, the military character of the Indonesian Red Cross served to weaken its medical functions. According to information from Timor in mid-1978, all of its doctors were from the military, and at that time, as we have seen, their first obligation when fighting was intense was to treat their own casualties. To be fair to the Indonesian Red Cross it should be noted that, in a country of Indonesia's size and poverty, there are many competing demands for its limited services, including famine relief operations.

In 1979 the Indonesian authorities were persuaded to allow a limited international relief operation to be set up in the province, and in April the International Committee of the Red Cross and the U.S. Catholic Relief Services were invited to conduct surveys of East Timor's urgent humanitarian needs. The first aid workers were shocked at the human misery they encountered. They estimated that between a tenth and a third of the population had perished because of the war, and more than 200 000 of the remainder were languishing in resettlement camps which one relief worker described as being as horrible as any he had seen anywhere, including the Thai–Cambodian border. All of these inmates were in poor physical condition; about one-third of them would die of starvation unless they were treated within the next two months, while the condition of another 20 000 was believed to be so poor that it was probably too late to save their lives. Confronted with the results of these preliminary surveys the Indonesian government agreed to allow relief programmes by the ICRC and the CRS, which began in about August of the same year, that is, almost four years after the invasion of Dili. These programmes were still to be conducted through an Indonesian infrastructure, in which the foreign presence was minimal. For example, the ICRC operation was to be, in the terms of the agreement with *Palang Merah Indonesia*, 'carried out in the field under the auspices of the Indonesian Red Cross with ICRC material and technical support'. Under this arrangement, the Indonesian Red Cross, whose representative was Brigadier-General Dr Moh Saronto, appointed a member of its Central Committee as project officer, to be 'responsible for the implementation of the operation'. Furthermore, an Indonesian doctor stationed in Dili was to be responsible for the missions in the field. In fact, the foreign component of the ICRC presence in East Timor seldom exceeded three persons. Still, it was a start, and the teams immediately concentrated their relief work on eight severely affected and isolated areas, covering about 60 000 people. With a staff of over 190 (only three of them non-Indonesian), and a budget of just under $7 million, the mission moved swiftly into action. However, at least initially, the Indonesians evidently insisted that the ICRC pay its way. Thus, the original estimate of a total expenditure of $6 966 030 included an appropriation of $3 383 400 for the hire of helicopters for transport purposes — as against $2 823 910 for food, blankets, etc. The Indonesian government also insisted that all food aid go first to Jakarta, rather than direct to East Timor, a practice which caused some lengthy delays, and led to protests from Australia, which was by far the biggest contributor, having made available aid valued at more than $3 million. The operation itself appears to have gone smoothly and efficiently, and by the end of 1979 the crisis was reported to be easing.

The Catholic Relief Services operation was of a different character. In a sense CRS acted as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy, in that almost all of its considerable funding for this particular exercise came from the U.S. government's Agency for International Development (AID), which provided the equivalent of almost $A10 million for the exercise. On paper its objectives were rather broader than those of the ICRC. Its efforts were focused on a 'target group' of some 200 000 Timorese to whom it supplied such items as non-fat dry milk, rice, corn–soya blend, and soya milk, and its programme also included the provision of seeds to villagers so that they might establish their own crops as soon as possible.

From the testimony of the United States ambassador to Indonesia, Edward E. Masters, to the House Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs on 4 December 1979, the CRS programme looked impressive. Ambassador Masters testified that the head of CRS in Indonesia had just informed him that the distribution of their commodities in East Timor was ahead of schedule, and that 'its programme' had already reached over '75% of the resettlement areas', and was expected to cover them all in spite of the fact that the rainy season had already begun. Masters was obviously greatly impressed with their work, but then he was also quite impressed with the performance of the Indonesian government. For example, in the same testimony, he said: 'It should be emphasized, however, that this emergency relief is only part of a larger effort in which the Indonesian Government is playing a significant role.' By helping out with communications with the 150 resettlement sites, the Indonesian authorities were greatly assisting both the ICRC and CRS efforts. The emphasis of the Indonesian government programme, he pointed out, was to regroup the neediest of the population 'into resettlement centers which are located where the land is relatively good and near such communications routes as exist. Under these circumstances, it will be much easier to provide the people with the necessities of life.'[24] And, it seemed, the CRS would give its support to this interesting social reorganization, which, in reality, was designed primarily for security reasons; the Americans could hardly have been unaware of this because the 'resettlement centres' were based on the 'strategic hamlet' concept they themselves had introduced into Vietnam, for precisely the same reasons. It seems that the Ambassador's account of the situation, and of the role of the CRS, was less than candid. For one thing, he mentioned that CRS 'had people working in Timor to monitor their programs (CRS currently has about 90 persons there)' but what he didn't mention was that these people were Indonesians, many of them selected by the army, and not Americans, and, in the circumstances, they could hardly have been expected to carry out an impartial monitoring of its activities. Late in 1981 a CRS official admitted that the organization had 'no American personnel stationed in East Timor, because it was CRS policy to leave the administration of its programs to the local people'.[25] In a discussion about the human rights situation in East Timor, a CRS official reportedly declared that the CRS was 'going where the Government of Indonesian wants it to go and doing what the Government of Indonesia wants it to do'. It asked no political questions. 'East Timor relies on the Russians, it's been said around here and it's enough to influence judgements round here' was one revealing remark.[26] It was subsequently disclosed by a senior CRS official that no more than 20 per cent of the organization's aid was distributed by the church, the rest being channelled through the Indonesian military infrastructure.

This does not of course mean that CRS aid has been totally ineffective in East Timor. Indeed, it would only be fair to credit it with having contributed to the substantial improvement that had been achieved in nutrition and health by mid-1980. But, whereas the ICRC programme was very carefully non-political, as it had been under Pasquier in 1975 during Fretilin's short interregnum in the territory, the same cannot be said about the Catholic Relief Services programme. In a sense it was blatantly political, in spite of the protests of officials in New York. The CRS took care to steer clear of the underlying human rights issues in the territory, and took care not to suggest that any blame for what had transpired could be placed on Indonesia. Worse, in a sense it became a vehicle for the official American policy. It had the effect of deflecting attention from Indonesia's contravention of the U.N. Charter, by treating the wounds of the victims and putting some food into their stomachs. As one CRS official seemed to be suggesting, the programme was designed as much to help the Indonesians out as to provide humanitarian relief for the Timorese. There can be little doubt that the Indonesians therefore warmed more to the CRS assistance than to the ICRC operation, which involved closer monitoring and perhaps opened up the possibility of information leaking to the outside world. The ICRC could not but appreciate the contrast between the complete freedom its mission had enjoyed during the Fretilin interregnum, and the very limited operation it was grudgingly allowed to undertake in 1979. For example, the Indonesians at first contrived to keep the ICRC away from sensitive, though traditional, functions like the tracing of missing persons and family reunification. Back in 1976 rumours that the International Red Cross might be permitted to play a role in helping Timorese leave the territory led, as we have seen, to thousands of names being recorded on lists, to the anger and embarrassment of the Indonesian military.

From all accounts the ICRC presence was greatly valued by the Timorese. Its Indonesian and Swiss members alike appear to have carried out their work conscientiously, and their presence itself evidently exercised a moderating influence on the military in those centres where they were located. Twice the agreement was renewed for a further six months, but early in 1981 it was terminated. Letters from Timor at the time of the mission's departure showed that the Timorese became apprehensive that the occupation authorities would return to the more oppressive policies of earlier times. The writer of one of these letters pleaded for outside organizations to press for the ICRC's return as soon as possible. Reports from East Timor between July and October 1981 give some inkling as to the real reason the Indonesian military was anxious for the mission to leave the territory. Within weeks of its departure yet another major military operation, *Operasi Keamanan*, was launched against Fretilin remnants, and from the many subsequent reports it is clear that some of the techniques involved would have disturbed the convention-conscious officials of the International Red Cross.

Although the efforts of concerned Indonesians should not be discounted it was largely through the work of the ICRC and CRS teams that living conditions in East Timor improved significantly in the 1980–81 period. Reports from the province during this time indicate that famine was arrested in the affected areas, and that the physical condition of the Timorese in the resettlement centres visibly improved. In mid-1980 a CRS official, John Donnelly, told the Congressional Committee on Appropriations that 'there was dramatic visible evidence that the program to date has been a success in a life and death situation. Available statistics all showed major drops in death rates'.[27]

These views were more or less endorsed by ICRC officials with whom the writer had discussions in New York in the following October. The mission in East Timor, they reported, had informed the international headquarters of the organization that the worst of the food crisis in the territory was under control. Further, it was claimed that, in spite of continued armed resistance to Indonesian occupation in central and eastern districts, by September 1981 the occupying authorities in East Timor were more securely in control than ever. One foreign visitor who went to the territory in September 1981 had been able to visit several main administrative centres, including Ainaro, Suai and Baucau, in what appeared to be relaxed security conditions. The position in 1982 was a matter of some debate in Australia, especially after a three-day visit to the '27th Province' by former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, who contended that there were no signs of famine and that conditions were better than ever before. A somewhat less rosy picture was painted by Peter Hastings, who accompanied Whitlam, but both discredited an earlier report from the Apostolic Administrator of East Timor, Monsignor Martinho da Costa Lopes, that famine, or at least the risk of famine, was still present.

The comments of da Costa Lopes (or the Acting Bishop, as he is usually called) were made in a letter to an Australian bishop. The point of this letter was not that famine continued in East Timor, but that it would reoccur at some time in the future if food stocks were not sent to the territory. Although he has rarely resorted to public statements, the Acting Bishop has been a fearless critic of Indonesian policies in East Timor. On the one hand, this has angered the Indonesian authorities, with whom he has been the subject of slander and intimidation; on the other, da Costa Lopes has come to be acknowledged by the Timorese as their courageous spokesman. His position, which makes him directly responsible to the Vatican, and not to the Indonesian church hierarchy, provides him with an independence unrivalled by any other Timorese, including the provincial governor. He has tried to intervene to prevent killings in the Dili area, he has tried to draw the attention of high-ranking Indonesian officials to major atrocities, and at least once he has directly appealed to President Suharto. To the Indonesians da Costa Lopes has become an irritant, someone who is capable of embarrassing them internationally, but to most Timorese he appears to be a source of unity, inspiration and hope.

In 1981 the Acting Bishop protested at a number of wanton killings, especially at a massacre at Lacluta where Indonesian troops killed several hundred surrendered Fretilin members, with their wives and children. Disquiet among the authorities at his activities and remarks led to a concerted effort to have him discredited and removed.

The publication in Australia of da Costa Lopes' comments about famine in Timor and his urgent request for more food aid angered Indonesian officials, and there appears to be some link between their attempts to discredit the Bishop and the invitation to Mr Whitlam and Mr Hastings to visit East Timor. What is significant is that the invitation apparently came from the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, which had for some time played a major international public-relations role in relation to the Timor problem. According to information from sources in Timor since the visit took place in early March, the reception was carefully organized, with the areas that were experiencing serious food problems being excluded from the itinerary, in spite of Mr Whitlam's later insistence that he was given unrestricted freedom. In the event, Mr Whitlam's conclusions are astonishing, and must have exceeded the expectations of his hosts. He returned full of praise for the new order in East Timor, reaching 'the clear verdict' that 'the conditions in East Timor are much better than before the civil war of 1975 and the famine of 1978'. He reported: 'The Indonesian authorities, with the advice of international bodies, have committed themselves to thorough development programs for the province.' He attributed the misrepresentation of the situation to the 'mendacious' comments of the Acting Bishop.[28] A similarly glowing account of the 'Indonesianization' of East Timor came from the pen of Australian journalist John Hamilton, who spent six days there in April 1983, also at the invitation of the CSIS. Hamilton praised the material improvements made possible by a lavish Indonesian development programme, and contrasted the situation with the tense atmosphere he had experienced during a similarly brief visit to East Timor during the civil war.[29]

These bold conclusions have not, however, been supported by more detailed information from several other sources whose stays in East Timor were of much longer duration, and some of whom are much more familiar with the territory. For example, one person with more than ten years experience in Timor said in August 1982 that there was a critical shortage of food in a number of areas, including Baguia, Luro, Laga, Quelicai and Iliomar. The reasons for the continuing shortage were said to be the effects of resettlement, which had meant moving the people too far away from their fields, the effect of malnutrition which rendered the people too weak to work, and the lack of water buffalo to plough the fields. According to this source, the modest supplies of grain that had been available earlier in the year had been exhausted by May. Yet another visitor to East Timor, who went there several months after the Whitlam visit, also spoke of a serious food shortage in the eastern districts of the province.[30] From these accounts, the root problems were the debilitated and demoralized state of the population, and corruption and distribution difficulties. In August, for example, one observer contrasted famine conditions in these districts with the fact that warehouses in Dili were filled with corn, some of which was rotting. Against these reports the glowing account given by Mr Whitlam seems quite incredible. It was further discredited by the American journalist Rod Nordland, who spent eleven days in Timor in May 1982. He described the province as 'a land beset by widespread malnutrition and hunger', and attributed the failure of the grain harvest to *Operasi Keamanan*. The corn had not been planted on time, he said, because the men had been forced to participate in the operations in the mountains.[31]

It is hard to take Mr Whitlam's views on the situation in Timor seriously, in spite of his energetic attempts to get them across to the public. He testified at length to the Australian Senate enquiry into the human rights situation in the province, and later, as a private petitioner, to the Fourth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. Clearly his view of the problem is shaped by his role in 1974 and 1975, but in fairness it is necessary to mention another aspect. Not only was the Whitlam visit of extremely short duration; it took place during the last months of the wet season when the presence of a large amount of food from the natural environment would have minimized food problems — at least for several weeks. Whitlam and Hastings were, of course, accompanied by International Red Cross officials, who apparently briefed them about the situation as they saw it. Mr Whitlam later exploited this association in an attempt to reinforce the credibility of his own assessment, but the views of the ICRC were much more guarded. First, the mission had been anxious not to antagonize the Indonesians, in order to be able to continue its work, and therefore its officials seem to have been determined to keep out of the debate begun by the publication of the Acting Bishop's letter. But in a later letter to Jose Ramos Horta the ICRC indicated a certain discomfort and embarrassment at the way the Timor mission had become associated with the Whitlam visit. Shortly after the Whitlam visit an official was reported as saying that one should not speak of a serious shortage of food all over East Timor, which seemed to imply that it existed in a number of places. He also admitted that in the next few months serious problems were expected to develop in a number of areas, as indeed did occur, and as reports from other sources attest.

However, if improvements in the food situation and reductions in the level of armed resistance have occurred, it should not necessarily be taken to mean that the people of East Timor have now resigned themselves to a future as part of Indonesia, or that political and economic conditions have correspondingly improved. At the end of 1980 a high-ranking Indonesian official candidly told the writer that, if the opportunity were given them, more than 90 per cent of Timorese would still vote against *integrasi*. A foreign journalist who went to Timor early in 1983 later commented privately that the Timorese population appeared to be waging a kind of 'cold war' against the Indonesians. There have also been persistent reports of continuing dissatisfaction within the resettlement centres which, some Timorese contend, are no better than internment camps. Apart from the restrictions on freedom of movement imposed on the inmates, it is said that many of these centres are badly located, being some distance from the agricultural land to which the able-bodied are sent to work. Perhaps the greatest disruption is the drastic change in life-style for the Timorese, who traditionally lived in small hamlets, rather than in larger village communities. But many, if not most, of the hundreds of tiny hamlets which were scattered across the island, on hillsides and in the valleys, have been totally destroyed, and this life-style is no longer possible.

The war, the ensuing famine, and the social upheaval since 1975 have clearly had a devastating effect on East Timor's rural economy, as well as having demoralized the ordinary people. In October 1981 a seminar in Dili on the future development of the province was told by an Indonesian agricultural specialist that the water buffalo (*kerbau*) population of East Timor had declined from more than 150 000 in the mid-1970s to less than 25 000. In fact, the Indonesian military administration did little to resuscitate Timor's food production for some five years after the invasion. Then they began to introduce some farming improvements at Maliana, Manatuto, Baucau, Liquica and certain other fertile areas. In the past these areas were usually farmed by the planters, rather than the ordinary people. According to one expert opinion, which was expressed at the Dili seminar, because of the province's rich valleys, fertile plains and permanent sources of water, it could become economically self-sufficient in about five years.[32] There is more than a touch of irony about such an assessment, if one recalls that in 1975 the Indonesians persistently sought to justify the case for integration by arguing that the Portuguese colony lacked the economic viability to contemplate independence!

The first industry to attract the attention of the new rulers was Timor's small but profitable coffee industry, the income from which was to become an important source of private gain to a group of senior military officers.

Predictably, the half-hearted early efforts to resuscitate East Timor's shattered economy were concentrated on those sectors from which the new rulers could themselves derive most benefit. Most of the worthwhile enterprises were in fact taken over directly or indirectly by army officers, little benefit being passed on to the Timorese employees. In some cases the owners had already fled the country, while in others it was necessary to depose the existing management. One firm — P. T. Denok, sometimes referred to as Denok-Hernandez Internacional — was to emerge as the territory's dominant enterprise. P. T. Denok, which, at least for a time, was managed by a Chinese brought to East Timor from Jakarta, was originally established to absorb the extensive estates and assets of the Portuguese enterprise SAPT. It is said to have been set up by a group of senior officers, including the *Panglima*, Brigadier-General Dading Kalbuadi, and by 1980 its operations had been expanded, enabling this enterprise to exercise a virtual monopoly over such industrial and commercial life as existed in the territory at the time, with the prized coffee industry as its base, as well as the source of handsome profits. A letter from Indonesia in September 1981 thus described P. T. Denok and other enterprises as 'being owned by a group of generals, who had established a monopoly of commerce and industry in Timor'.

Dissatisfaction with the management of the economy was expressed in a report to President Suharto by the local assembly of East Timor in June 1981, which suggested that economic conditions had not improved in the five and a half years of Indonesian rule. In fact, in the words of its authors, 'the economic situation of the people of East Timor is now passing through the most tragic phase since the beginning of the civil war in this region'. While it was admitted that 'quite a lot of financial assistance for the purposes of building up the economy has been received' the report declared that 'the people of East Timor have not yet felt any real benefits from their own efforts [in the production of] various agricultural products such as coffee, sandalwood, kaset [*sic*, meaning not clear], candlenut, timber, copper and other produce'. Accordingly, coffee planters were forced to accept very low prices for their produce. 'In East Timor, there is only one enterprise that may purchase coffee in the regions through its representatives at a very low price per kilo. This enterprise is PT Denok. PT Denok is able to monopolise coffee, sandalwood and other produce. . . . PT Denok is a special enterprise located in East Timor in order to absorb all the main economic products of the province for its services to the Government of the Republic of Indonesia.'[33]

The report referred specifically to the rapacious exploitation of sandalwood. 'In all the places throughout the region of East Timor where sandalwood has been growing, certain individuals have arrived, bringing people and forcing them to cut down the timber; dead sandalwood trees as well as young sandalwood trees have been cut down and even their roots pulled out. The timber has then been sold in Dili to PT Denok at a very low price even though it should fetch a high price.' The same kind of exploitation was said to be going on in relation to other such resources, upon which the Timorese traditionally depended for their livelihood. And so it was, the authors of this document lamented, after five years of integration the vast majority of the population were 'not yet able to enjoy stable living conditions'.

Another subject raised by the Assembly report was the misuse of development funds by certain Indonesian officials, including Colonel Kalangi, the *Sekwilda*, or secretary of the region, a position which made him one of the most powerful officials in the military-dominated administration of East Timor. Colonel Kalangi and his deputy, Captain A. Azis Hasyam, were alleged to have conspired to squander project funds provided by the central government. Assembly members were said to have made on-the-spot investigations into a number of projects involving expenditure of hundreds of millions of rupiahs, and 'were extremely disappointed to discover that they were totally fictitious'. One of those involved in this corruption was a relative of Colonel Kalangi.

In this appeal to President Suharto, the authors told of the misuse of medical supplies, some of which had gone to East Timor as part of foreign aid consignments. The report asked:

> Where are all those medicines that have been sent here for the people of East Timor by the central government and from abroad in such large quantities? There is a severe shortage of medicines in the hospitals of East Timor whose needs are being neglected although in the shops of Chinese merchants medicines identical to those provided with government assistance are available in huge quantities, in chemist shops as well as in general stores. Where have these medicines come from?[34]

Although economic activity has been stimulated during the past two years, many of the Timorese themselves have encountered great difficulty in obtaining other than menial, low-paid work. A condition for the continuation of employment in the government sector has been the formal acceptance of Indonesian citizenship, a step that many

Timorese have been reluctant to take for fear of ending all hope of being able to leave East Timor for Portugal or Australia. Also, the new configuration of political and economic power in the province has meant that the Timorese role in most sectors is considerably weaker than it was in the bad old colonial days before the Lisbon coup of April 1974. The local Assembly, as the reports referred to above attested, has little real power. This was exposed by the subsequent arrest of those deputies who dared complain to President Suharto about the plight of his newly acquired subjects. At every level of government real power is exercised by Indonesians, in practice by the military. The fact that the report sent to President Suharto in June 1981 could not dislodge important Indonesian officers, like Colonel Kalangi and Captain Azis Hasyam, from their powerful positions in the provincial administration is an indication of the powerlessness of those Timorese officials and politicians who have positions in the new political and administrative infrastructures which were st up after *integrasi*.

To take up the DPRD report once again, in the districts of Lospalos, Viqueque, Liquica, and Covalima Timorese were said to have been tortured and executed for patently trivial reasons. According to the authors of this report, 'these murders and acts of torture committed by these irresponsible persons or groups have resulted in a situation of instability throughout the region of East Timor'. Among the victims of these atrocities were a number of women prisoners who had been 'tortured with electricity and burnt with cigarettes by some elements of the armed forces who also inflicted immoral sexual acts upon them'. Such allegations had been coming out of Timor for some five years, and many were made to the author when he interviewed newly arrived refugees in Lisbon in 1977.

The DPRD report was not, however, the last account of atrocities of this kind, although killings were said to have been reduced after mid-1980, when the ICRC began its operations. There have been many reports of summary executions and other killings by the forces of *Operasi Keamanan* in the latter part of 1981. Several hundred Timorese are reported by a number of sources to have been killed at Lacluta in September 1981. Apparently a party of Fretilin guerrillas surrendered with their women and children. According to one eyewitness the women were taken away by the Indonesians (called *bapas*, or 'sirs' by the Timorese), but the males, children as well as adults, were then shot dead and their bodies covered with leaves and dry grass and set alight. After this spate of killing, thousands of Timorese were exiled to Atauro, and perhaps to other remote islands not far from East Timor. At one of these scenes of senseless murder, where an Indonesian soldier killed the wife and child of a Fretilin guerrilla, he was reportedly asked by another Timorese why he did it. He was said to reply: 'When you clean the field, don't you kill all the snakes, the small and large alike?'[35]

As late as April and May 1982, according to a visitor to the province, there were reports of Timorese being arrested and tortured 'with electric shocks'.[36] According to this source, other methods included the removal of fingernails and the suspension of prisoners by the hands for lengthy periods. The raping of women was still occurring, though usually well away from the main towns. Also, in 1982 there were persistent reports that a small group of Fretilin prisoners were incinerated after their capture. The many accounts of such abuses in 1981 and 1982 are a serious indictment of the indiscipline and inhumanity of the Indonesian military, whose methods do not seem to have been affected by international criticism and pressure.

To be fair to the Indonesians, some officials have tried to prevent abuses and injustices, but they do not appear to have been able to bring senior officers like Sinaga and Kalangi to justice. However, the DPRD report obviously did not affect the positions and careers of the principal officials implicated by the charges of brutality and corruption, for, more than a year later, they were still securely in office. Indeed, the arrest in mid-November 1981 of the two signatories to the Assembly report, Leandro Isaac and Sousa Soares, suggested that the only response to these serious charges was a punitive measure designed to silence the petitioners. However, the deputies were later released, thanks to the intervention of the Speaker of the Indonesian Parliament.

Ironically, seven years after the attack on Dili on 7 December 1975 the Timorese were in effect subject to a far more oppressive political and economic exploitation than they had been forced to endure during the last generation of Portuguese colonial rule. It would seem that the nightmarish experiences which exacted great suffering and a catastrophic loss of life between 1976 and 1978 are now over, but reports and letters from Indonesian as well as Timorese church sources are still not couched in the optimism that characterizes so many of the comments about East Timor from the selected Western visitors like Mr Whitlam, diplomats based at embassies in Jakarta and the trickle of foreign journalists. Most of this group appear to have been easily persuaded that all the ugliness, backwardness and discontent in East Timor were rooted in the much-vilified legacy of Portuguese colonial rule. While the harsh and brutal practices of the early occupation years are now probably rare occurrences, to a Timorese who has no desire for 'integration' — and these still evidently form the majority — the true character of Indonesian rule in the territory remains oppressive, punitive and unrelenting, yet another form of colonial rule. As it was put to the author by one cautious foreign visitor, who had been in Timor in September 1981, 'The Timorese now seem to be easier about the situation, but all of them are still fervently hoping for another solution for their future.'[37] Some Indonesians acknowledged the depth of Timorese resentment. As late as December 1981, an Indonesian journalist observed that it would take a full generation before the Timorese people came to terms with their new status. The suffering, the brutality and humiliation of the past might be easy to discuss or rationalize in Canberra or Washington; in Dili these nightmarish experiences remain a vivid and bitter memory that will not be erased by propaganda and the material benefits accruing from development projects, for the Timorese are a deeply alienated people.